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Haiti Citizen Security Assessment (CSA)

Final Report

Latin America and the Caribbean Learning and Rapid Response (LACLEARN)

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ACRONYMS

ADR	Alternative Dispute Resolution
BSAP	<i>Brigades de Surveillance des Aires Protégées</i>
CSA	Citizen Security Assessment
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSPJ	Superior Council of the Judiciary
DEA	U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration
EMA	School of Magistrates
FADH	Armed Forces of Haiti
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GOH	Government of Haiti
GUC	Grant under Contract
G9	G9 Family and Allies
HNP	Haitian National Police
HTG	Haitian Gourde
IG	Inspector General
INL	Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs
JSSP	Justice Sector Strengthening Program
KII	Key Informant Interview
LACLEARN	Latin America and Caribbean Learning and Rapid Response
LAPOP	Latin American Public Opinion Project
LEVE	Local Enterprise and Value Chain Enhancement
MINUSTAH	United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti
MOJPS	Ministry of Justice and Public Security
NORC	National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago
OPC	Office of Citizen Protection
Sociodig	Sociodigital Research Group
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USG	United States Government

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Latin America and Caribbean Learning and Rapid Response's (LACLEARN's) Haiti Citizen Security Assessment (CSA) for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) analyzes the state of citizen security and violence in Haiti, including its social, economic, and political determinants. The assessment employed a mixed-methods approach including an extensive desk review; a national phone survey; focus group discussions (FGDs); and key informant interviews (KIs) with subject-matter experts, civil society and community actors, justice and security actors, donors, and Haitian citizens, including vulnerable populations. Resulting from the team's analysis, this report outlines evidence-based, timely strategies to improve citizen security in Haiti.

KEY FINDINGS

VIOLENT CRIME IS ON THE RISE AND ATTRIBUTED TO GANGS

Citizens' perceptions indicate that actual levels of crime and violence are likely much higher than official data reflect. Official Haitian National Police (HNP) crime data reflect an upward trend in many forms of violence and crime (particularly kidnappings) between 2018 and 2021. However, CSA respondents among Haitian citizens and the international community viewed these data as dramatic underestimates of the current security crisis. Respondents also noted that the increased crime and violence affect all strata of Haitian society.

Respondents primarily attributed this spike in violent crime to the increasing influence and spread of gangs. As gangs have taken control of neighborhoods and towns, they use violence to maintain control and protect their territories against rivals. As a result, responses suggest many Haitians (particularly those living in or near gang-controlled areas) feel insecure in their communities, are afraid of engaging in routine activities, and have adjusted lifestyles to minimize risk.

GANG OPERATIONS ARE NUANCED AND VARIED

The assessment team's literature review and qualitative data provided insights into the structure and operations of Haitian gangs. Haitian gangs engage in a variety of criminal activities, including extortion; kidnapping; political services (such as ensuring votes for politicians among a community); security services; and trafficking of drugs, weapons, and persons. The activities gangs undertake are a function of their organizational and tactical sophistication, their existing territorial control, and political patronage, among other factors. As a result, certain gangs appear particularly focused on a specific subset of criminal activities (e.g., 400 Mawazo and kidnapping). Formal gang alliances – such as *G9 an Fanmi e Alye* (G9 Family and Allies) – are another recent development which has reshaped the landscape.

As evidenced by survey data and official crime statistics, Port-au-Prince bears the brunt of gang presence and insecurity. Kidnappings and gang expansions have led to increasing parts of the city becoming unsafe, as respondents reiterated. However, other parts of the country, especially border cities, ports, and other large cities, increasingly face similar issues. While gangs (and *baz*¹) are not a new phenomenon in Haiti, their overwhelming role in Haitian society today is undisputed. A Haitian journalist characterized

¹ Baz are primarily social groups (some of which are armed) that attract children and youth who are out of school and unemployed. Because the line between baz and gangs is blurred, gangs recruit from baz members and other youth. See additional background in the *Gangs, Crime, and Society* section.

their expansion and magnitude as such: “Ten (10) years ago, Haiti had few criminal gangs. By mid-2021, there were at least 169 active gangs in Haiti, operating mostly in the Port-au-Prince area.”²

POLITICS, ECONOMIC ELITES, AND GANG ACTIVITY ARE INTERCONNECTED

When political instability and conflict rise, space is created for political and economic elites to strategically collaborate with gangs. For instance, gangs in Haiti remain a useful tool for politicians to secure votes of the local electorate and quell movements that might threaten elite impunity. As a result, the nexus of gangs, economic elites, and politicians dominates the country.

The recent expansion of gangs and the matching need for weapons,^{3,4} along with their increasing control of major infrastructure such as ports, appear to have increased their involvement in transnational crime. In addition, experts view the volume and type of weapons in the hands of gangs today as a telltale sign that they are connected to transnational crime and local elites; gang members are typically from poor neighborhoods and for them the cost of such contraband is far out of reach.

Despite such pervasive networks, in recent years Haitian gangs have obtained increased autonomy and impunity. In the past, gangs were given control of select neighborhoods in exchange for delivering political support to elites during elections. Today, expanded gang control has enabled them to rely less on support from elites, while increasing elite reliance on gangs as influential actors.

HAITI'S BARELY-FUNCTIONING JUSTICE SYSTEM LEAVES CITIZENS WITH FEW ALTERNATIVES

The assessment team found that Haiti's justice system functions poorly and fails to serve citizens. While donors have invested in the justice system for decades, only incremental improvements in specific institutions or legal frameworks have been obtained, but no sustainable advances in access to justice.

Government of Haiti (GOH) resistance to increasing the judiciary's funding and independence has been a major contributing factor to its poor performance. While revised criminal procedure codes were approved by Presidential decree in 2020, political chaos has hindered their initial June 2022 implementation targets. In line with these systemic issues, the judiciary has substantial shortcomings in its delivery of justice: poor infrastructure, a strained relationship with the HNP, prolonged pretrial detention, widespread corruption and elite impunity, and weak protection of victims.

The assessment team found that the judiciary rarely helps citizens gain justice in response to violence, which is of particular relevance to the current security crisis. Both perpetrators and victims of violence often avoid the formal justice system, resolving their problems through informal justice, including mediation, alternative dispute resolution (ADR), and vigilantism. In gang-controlled areas, gang leaders frequently mediate complaints by victims and other civil disputes.

² Le Nouvelliste. 2021. “Les différents gangs auraient plus de 3000 soldats et autant d'armes, selon les autorités haïtiennes.” (July 2). Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://lenouvelliste.com/article/230190/les-differents-gangs-auraient-plus-de-3-000-soldats-et-autant-darmes-selon-les-autorites-haitiennes>.

³ Gang activities depend heavily on access to weapons and ammunition. An increase in the number and strength of gangs has created a greater need for weapons. This is no small feat in Haiti, which has been under a U.S. arms embargo since 1991. Despite this, weapons from the United States and other countries are regularly smuggled into Haiti, as facilitated by gang control, corruption of customs, and a lack of GOH resources to conduct sufficient inspections.

⁴ There have been reports of guns exported from Haiti to Jamaica in exchange for drugs. See Insight Crime. 2020. “Jamaica and Haiti Swap Drugs and Guns.” (June 23). Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://insightcrime.org/news/analysis/jamaica-haiti-drugs-guns/>

LAW ENFORCEMENT IS UNABLE TO GUARANTEE BASIC SECURITY FOR CITIZENS

Similar to the broader judicial system, the assessment team found that the HNP is overwhelmed by the country's security environment, lacks resources, and suffers from political interventions and corruption that breed mistrust. Police officers are ill-equipped and afraid to confront gangs, particularly as they expand their control. Internal and external accountability measures have proven ineffective, while police may collaborate with gangs for financial reasons or personal safety.

In addition, the assessment team found that many Haitians do not trust (or rely on) the police. Survey and interview responses suggest that the HNP is generally unable to respond to community needs. As a result, many Haitians have had to either flee from the gangs or cooperate with them, and growing areas of Port-au-Prince have become lawless.

ECONOMIC STRIFE AND INSECURITY POSE A SELF-REINFORCING CYCLE

Haitian insecurity is closely related to the country's broader economic strife. The 2017 Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) AmericasBarometer survey indicated that 81 percent of respondents thought the economy had deteriorated in the 12 months prior to the survey.⁵ Likewise, nearly all CSA youth FGDs cited poverty and food insecurity as critical factors contributing to insecurity in Haiti.

A range of CSA interviews noted mechanisms through which insecurity undermines the already-weak economy. For example, high levels of insecurity disrupt already-limited economic activities. Such restrictions result in higher prices for basic goods and fuel, affecting households and transporters. Higher prices and losses of already-limited economic opportunities increase pressure on economically strained households. The combination of economic strain and insecurity may then push some to join gangs, which reinforces this cycle. Similarly, insecurity negatively affects the environment for business operations and investment. The assessment team found that typically small, informal Haitian businesses and even most formal businesses are subject to extortion by gangs and increased security costs.

A WEAK EDUCATION SYSTEM LEADS TO INCREASED YOUTH VULNERABILITY

School plays an important role in fostering youth development and access to economic opportunity by keeping youth busy, in a well-established structure, and providing opportunities to find employment or develop income-generating livelihood activity. The assessment team found that none of these roles are adequately fulfilled by current Haitian education (both public and private), and the primary and secondary education system is failing in multiple ways to deliver crucial support that might dampen gang and criminal activity.

FAMILIES HAVE MINIMAL ABILITY TO INFLUENCE COMMUNITY SECURITY

Haitian families and communities, particularly in gang-controlled and poor communities, face both day-to-day and long-term challenges exacerbated by the ongoing security crisis. The assessment team found that vulnerability factors include poverty and food insecurity, a lack of a nurturing family environment, the absence of community support (including basic services), and inadequate education. Interviews also highlighted a challenge to traditional family and community morals, which manifests itself in the normalization of violence and a lack of solidarity within communities.

⁵ The 2021 AmericasBarometer results should be available in late 2022 and are likely to be even worse than 2017 results, given global and Haiti-specific developments over the past 5 years.

CIVIL SOCIETY'S ABILITY TO IMPROVE SECURITY IS LIMITED

Haitian civil society organizations (CSOs) have worked in gang-controlled slums for several years to administer social services and conflict-reduction initiatives. However, many CSOs, even those working on mediation and with gangs, reported that the operating space has closed in the past year. The assessment team concluded that while CSOs have worked effectively in many gang-affected neighborhoods, they can achieve little in the most violent neighborhoods (where GOH presence is also lacking). Ultimately, the sustainability of these efforts depends on reducing elite control of political institutions and increasing government funding to provide basic services.

A CORRUPT AND WEAK GOVERNMENT LEAVES A VACUUM FILLED BY GANGS

Haiti's current governance system appears to be captured by elites, hindering its ability to serve citizens and address insecurity. Evidence suggests that many Haitians believe politics and governance (along with poverty) are the major forces promoting insecurity in the country.

The GOH is starved for funds for essential state services, notably those required for security and justice in the current context. Haiti has entered a period of political chaos, characterized by the absence of two of the most important state institutions (including the lack of a functioning legislature over the past two years). In this scenario, some politicians, businesses, and gangs have created partnerships that advance their objectives at the expense of citizen security. The current state of the GOH makes holding legitimate elections an unlikely prospect in the near term.

RECOMMENDATIONS

GOVERNANCE AND ELECTIONS

- **Support Haitian efforts to hold credible and transparent presidential and legislative elections:** Haiti needs a legitimate president and a functioning legislative branch to address issues of citizen security. This effort must be led by Haitians with monitoring support from the international community. . The electoral process should seek to balance speed with the establishment of the necessary conditions for a successful election. Outside security resources may be necessary to secure the elections, particularly in Port-au-Prince, where gangs and insecurity restrict electoral participation. Further, USAID and other donors could build civil society's capacity for investigative journalism to hold candidates accountable for connections to corruption.
- **Continue to promote decentralization in Haiti:** Decentralization would reduce the extensive financial and political dependence of local governments on the GOH, and empower citizens through improved service delivery and public participation. USAID and other international actors should build demand for an effective legislative framework for decentralization through support to local governments, civil society, and the GOH. USAID has been funding programs to pursue this goal for more than a decade, but a recent analysis of one project, LOKAL+, suggests that significant work remains to be done.⁶
- **Build momentum related to tax reforms:** The current tax system is flawed in that general taxes make up only 13 percent of GNP⁷ and only 14 percent of taxes owed to the state are collected.⁸ The

⁶ OXFAM. 2021. "Empowering Local Governments? The LOKAL+ Project in Haiti." (July 2021). Available here.

⁷ International Monetary Fund. 2020. "Haiti: Selected Issues." (April 2020). Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://www.imf.org/~media/Files/Publications/CR/2020/English/IHTIEA2020002.ashx>.

⁸ OXFAM. 2021. "Empowering Local Governments? The LOKAL+ Project in Haiti." (July 2021). Available here.

system also benefits elites with the resources and connections to take advantage of it. USG actors should support awareness-raising and advocacy efforts to promote relevant reforms.

- **Support greater transparency and regulation of Haitian banks:** USG agencies along with other international donors should promote greater transparency and tighter controls on Haitian banks and financial institutions, which are key players in high-level corruption. USG actors should also coordinate with the U.S. Department of Treasury to investigate and prosecute money laundering by gangs and crime syndicates.

SECURITY, JUSTICE, AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

- **Create a comprehensive strategic framework for crime reduction:** USAID and other USG actors should develop a comprehensive framework for crime reduction in Haiti and monitor its implementation by local government and security actors. This effort should be led in collaboration with Haitian civil society, bring together government and security stakeholders, and include gang leaders in the process so far as permitted by U.S. law.
- **Strengthen CSOs' capacities in violence prevention, mitigation, and resilience:** CSOs play an important role in helping residents and communities survive as violence spreads across the country. USAID should provide grants to CSOs to develop approaches on violence prevention, mitigation, and resilience in areas that are not severely affected by violence but have gang presence. These grants could also support CSOs to build relations with gangs in these areas, and extend their violence prevention and resilience activities into other areas. One or more grants could help a coalition of CSOs work together with HNP under a comprehensive strategic framework for crime reduction, with capacity-building assistance from NGOs. Further, USG actors could build CSOs' capacities to facilitate local crime reporting and assistance to victims, while investing in relevant mechanisms in neighborhoods.
- **Initiate neighborhood-based gang reduction and transformation:** A serious gang reduction and societal reinsertion strategy requires sustainable financing, reliable police, and quality social services. Under these circumstances, USG actors could build the capacity of GOH institutions (including the HNP) to work with communities to address gang presence and violence in specific neighborhoods. This assistance could include (1) prioritizing state presence, such as a vetted HNP unit; (2) using visible prevention and interdiction techniques; (3) using dynamic, geo-referenced crime models to track progress; and (4) developing a community communications strategy.
- **Support an informal justice approach to help victims of violence:** Given the challenges citizens face within the formal justice system, USAID should initiate an activity that supports victims of violence (especially gang violence) with a focus on informal justice. The activity could provide grants and technical assistance to informal Haitian institutions, building their capacity to assist victims of violence and resolve conflict. Such institutions would include lawyers, legal aid offices, CSOs, religious leaders, and community leaders.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND SOCIAL SERVICES

- **Increase social support for poor families:** USAID should provide support for family-based prevention activities focused in high-crime areas. This activity should provide social and psychological support, training on positive parenting skills, and job insertion opportunities for at-risk youth.

- **Support gang and violence prevention for high-risk youth:** USAID should support gang and violence prevention activities for youth with the highest risk of gang recruitment. This activity should provide evidence-based interventions that are most suited for the context, and target out-of-school youth and high-risk in-school youth.
- **Embed school-based violence prevention into formal and informal education:** USAID should strengthen the capacity of public and private school teachers to deliver school-based violence prevention programming, ideally differentiated for low- and high-risk children and youth.

METHODOLOGY

STUDY PURPOSE

LACLEARN's Haiti CSA analyzes the state of citizen security and violence in Haiti, including its social, economic, and political determinants. The assessment provides USAID and other actors with evidence-based, timely strategies to improve citizen security in Haiti. Recommendations reflect the assessment team's analysis of opportunities and barriers for change, while considering past successes and failures in citizen security programming.

More specifically, the CSA analyzes:

- National and subnational patterns of insecurity and violence, with a particular focus on how gangs operate and interact with other actors and communities
- Crime and violence prevention, including key actors (e.g., the police, the judicial system, private security forces) and how they contribute to insecurity
- Social, economic, and political determinants of citizen security and violence, including socioeconomic structures such as the labor market, education system, and community

THEMES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The CSA is guided by three major themes (including nine sub-themes) that encompass various underlying research questions.

THEME 1: UNDERSTANDING INSECURITY AND VIOLENCE

- Main patterns and manifestations of insecurity and violence in Haiti
 - Do citizens' perceptions and statistics, to the extent that they exist, diverge?
 - What is the strength and nature of the relationship between gangs and violence/citizen security?
 - How are violence and gangs distributed across geographies, ethnic groups, social classes, and economic and industry contexts?
- Gangs, crime, and society^{9,10}
 - How are gangs structured and operating? What is their geographical reach?
 - How do gangs recruit and retain their members? What does a gang exit look like?
 - What roles do transnational crime organizations play in gang emergence and activity?
 - What is the relationship between gangs and communities?
 - What are the relationships between gangs and the political system, the police and the security forces, the judicial system, and the private sector?

⁹ To complement the CSA, LACLEARN issued a Grant under Contract (GUC) for InSight Crime to conduct a detailed analysis and mapping of Haiti's criminal dynamics (with a focus on gangs). While the CSA report addresses gangs in this section and throughout, the InSight Crime report provides a more in-depth analysis in line with these research questions. The InSight Crime final report is available separately; please contact the designated LACLEARN point of contact for additional information.

¹⁰ A summary brief of the InSight Crime analysis is available at: https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00ZF3H.pdf.

THEME 2: CRIME AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION, RESPONSE, AND SANCTIONING

- Justice System
 - How is the justice system structured and operating in Haiti? How are actors hired and trained? How is it funded?
 - What are key barriers to accessing justice in Haiti? Does it vary widely across geographies, ethnic groups, social classes, and economic contexts? What government and civil society mechanisms for enhancing access to justice exist (e.g., legal aid and alternative dispute resolution)?
 - How effective is the justice system in dealing with violence and citizen security challenges?
 - How do citizens perceive the justice system?
- Police and Law Enforcement
 - How is law enforcement structured and operating in Haiti? How are they hired and trained? How is it funded?
 - What are the priorities of law enforcement actors and what strategies and tactics do they employ? How responsive is law enforcement to local needs? What is the role of politics in shaping these priorities?
 - How is law enforcement acting to prevent and respond to violence and gang activity?
 - What are accountability mechanisms for law enforcement actors? Are they effective at preventing excessive force and corruption?
 - How do citizens perceive law enforcement?

THEME 3: SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND POLITICAL DETERMINANTS OF INSECURITY AND VIOLENCE

- Economy and Labor Market
 - What role do the economy and labor market play in fueling violence and gangs?
 - What opportunities exist for Haitian youth to acquire skills and make a living?
- Education System
 - What role does education (primary, secondary, and professional) play in violence and gangs? What relationship, if any, exists between education outcomes (dropout, graduation, etc.) and violence and gangs?
 - What elements of approaches to education (e.g., curriculum, teaching methods and training, access, and availability of schooling) may exacerbate violence and gang involvement?
- Community and Family
 - What are some of the characteristics that make communities more or less vulnerable or resilient to insecurity, violence, and gang activity?
 - What community policing and conflict resolution mechanisms exist in communities?
 - What is the role of religious leaders, if any, in dealing with violence and gangs?

- Civil Society
 - What evidence, if any, exists to indicate that civic engagement affects violence and gang involvement? What role do civil society and civic engagement and participation play in violence and gangs?
 - What options exist for youth to be civically engaged? What consultation and participation mechanisms are available for citizens? Are there significant youth social or political movements? If so, what is their stance on and role in gangs and violence?
 - Under what circumstances have CSOs been able to contribute significantly to mitigating violence in communities?
- Politics and Governance
 - What roles do political competition and instability play in insecurity and violence?
 - How do high-level corruption networks contribute to insecurity and gang activity?
 - To what extent are gangs and criminal organizations filling “governance gaps” of institutional weakness and poor provision of services?

TECHNICAL APPROACH

The assessment employed a mixed-methods approach, including an extensive desk review; a national phone survey; FGDs; and KIs with subject-matter experts, civil society and community actors, justice and security actors, international donors, and Haitian citizens, including vulnerable populations. The assessment used an actor-centered political economy analytical approach to understand the causes of insecurity and violence, while analyzing variances based on factors such as region and gender.

GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE: The assessment is national in scope, while it examines trends at the subnational level with focus on the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area (including Croix-des-Bouquets, Delmas, and Martissant) and Les Cayes in the South department.

DESK REVIEW: The assessment team first completed a comprehensive desk review aligned with the research questions. While this desk review did not entail a systematic review of all literature related to the themes, the assessment team targeted recent documents from the last 10 years and from diverse sources. The team also compiled recent statistics from reputable sources, such as LAPOP.

SURVEY: A national phone survey was conducted through a grant under contract (GUC) with Sociodigital Research Group (Sociodig) in Haiti, with technical oversight provided by the assessment team. The survey instrument was developed based on research questions and the principal gaps identified through the desk review. Due to the security context at the time of implementation, the assessment used a Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing survey, not a face-to-face survey.

Sampling was performed using a random phone number generator to identify tens of thousands of Haitian mobile phone numbers. Relative to recent surveys conducted in Haiti, the CSA survey sample suggests good representativeness of the overall Haitian population; the principal divergence is that the CSA survey sample is relatively younger and more educated than the overall population. Survey data collection took place between January and March 2022, and the final number of completed surveys was 701 (meeting the target sample size of 700).

KIIS AND FGDS: Qualitative data collection consisted of KIs and FGDS conducted by both the assessment team and Sociodig. In total, 58 individual or small group interviews were conducted, while 8

youth focus groups were completed. These primarily covered the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area (including Croix-des-Bouquets, Delmas, and Martissant) and Les Cayes. Respondents included GoH officials, citizen security experts, implementing partners, judicial actors, private-sector actors, security actors (including former HNP officers), community and religious leaders, civil society, and present and past gang members. The assessment team prepared tailored guides for each target respondent group.

LIMITATIONS: There are a few limitations regarding the assessment's methodology. In terms of survey representativeness, face-to-face surveys (relative to phone-based surveys) tend to better reflect an overall population. Phone-based surveys are also more limited in their length. However, a face-to-face survey was not feasible given the security context at the time of implementation. In addition, due to the survey's sample size, disaggregation of results by select variables (particularly department and age) was not always feasible. Lastly, given security developments in Haiti throughout the assessment's implementation, the assessment team faced challenges in terms of respondent recruitment and participation (particularly for select groups, such as gang members).

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Key findings and recommendations are structured based on the CSA's overarching themes, sub-themes, and research questions, as presented in the *Methodology* section.

THEME I: UNDERSTANDING INSECURITY AND VIOLENCE

MAIN PATTERNS AND MANIFESTATIONS OF INSECURITY AND VIOLENCE

While violent crime is on the rise according to official data, citizens' perceptions indicate that actual levels of crime and violence are likely much higher (and primarily attributed to gangs) than the current available data reflect. Official HNP crime data demonstrate an upward trend in many forms of violence and crime (particularly kidnappings) between 2018 and 2021. However, CSA respondents among Haitian citizens and the international community view these data as dramatic underestimates of the current security crisis. Respondents also reinforced the view that the increased crime and violence affect all strata of Haitian society.

Further, the assessment team concluded that violence is not evenly distributed throughout the country; rather, it is concentrated in the most urbanized areas of Haiti (such as Port-au-Prince in the Ouest [West] department). Official data show that the Ouest department is disproportionately affected; depending on the crime, the other most severely affected departments in diminishing order are Nord (North), Artibonite, Sud (South), and Nord-Ouest (North-West).

Respondents primarily attributed this spike in violent crime to the increasing influence and spread of gangs. As gangs have taken control of neighborhoods and towns, they use violence to maintain control and protect their territories against rivals. As a result, responses suggest many Haitians (particularly those living in or near gang-controlled areas) feel insecure in their communities, are afraid of engaging in routine activities, and have adjusted lifestyles to minimize risk.

Assessment Question: Do citizens' perceptions and statistics on insecurity and violence, to the extent they exist, diverge?

Official HNP crime statistics are widely considered unreliable, but they do show an upward trend in many forms of violence between 2018 and 2021. However, citizens' perceptions of crime indicate that the situation is likely more dire than official statistics suggest, as evidenced by LAPOP and CSA survey responses. The assessment team found that most Haitians believed both the intensity and distribution of violence had increased to unprecedented levels in the last few years. Nearly 40 percent of CSA survey respondents felt their neighborhood was at least somewhat unsafe and many reported adjusting their habits as a result.

STATISTICS ON INSECURITY AND VIOLENCE:^{11,12} LAPOP's 2020 Haitian National Survey¹³ found that

¹¹ Despite assistance from the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti to strengthen the HNP crime data system and capacity to assess the data, official statistics on insecurity and violence remain unreliable, especially due to lack of reporting crimes associated with widespread distrust of the police and the justice system. Nevertheless, they do indicate trends and magnitudes of crimes.

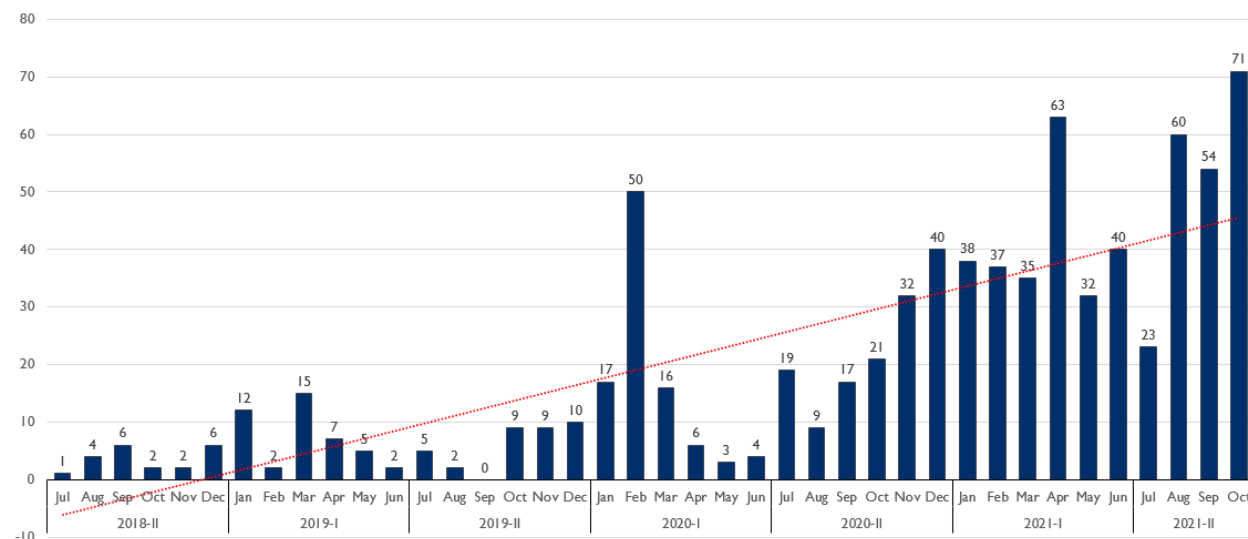
¹² All crime statistics and tables in this section were prepared by the HNP and presented in an untitled Excel table and a PowerPoint presentation, "Statistiques de criminalité : mois d'octobre 2021," dated November 4, 2021.

¹³ LAPOP. 2020. "2020 Haiti National Survey: Topline Report." Accessed November 14, 2022. https://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/haiti/LAPOP_Haiti_2020_CATI_OC_Topline_Report_Web_210410.pdf.

crime victimization, insecurity, and gang activity were common in Haiti. Nearly one-quarter of those surveyed reported having been the victim of a crime in the last year.

Among HNP data, kidnappings reflect the biggest change in crime levels over the past few years. The annual average of reported kidnappings has skyrocketed – 48 in 2018, 78 in 2019, 234 in 2020, and 453 in 2021 (see *Figure 1*). However, these levels are lower than those in 2005 (634) and 2006 (722).

Figure 1: Reported kidnappings in Haiti, 2018–2021



Intentional homicides have also increased in recent years, with an upward trend from 2018 to 2021 (see *Figure 2*). The highest level of intentional homicides was 171 in June 2020, while the lowest was 43 in December 2017. Weapons-related injuries (typically caused by guns) have increased slightly in the last 2 years, including a spike in February 2021 (see *Figure 3*). In comparison with increased levels of kidnappings, intentional homicides, and weapons-related injuries, in the last 2 years, while fluctuating, reported levels of rape have slightly decreased (see *Figure 4*).

Figure 2: Reported intentional homicides in Haiti, 2018–2021

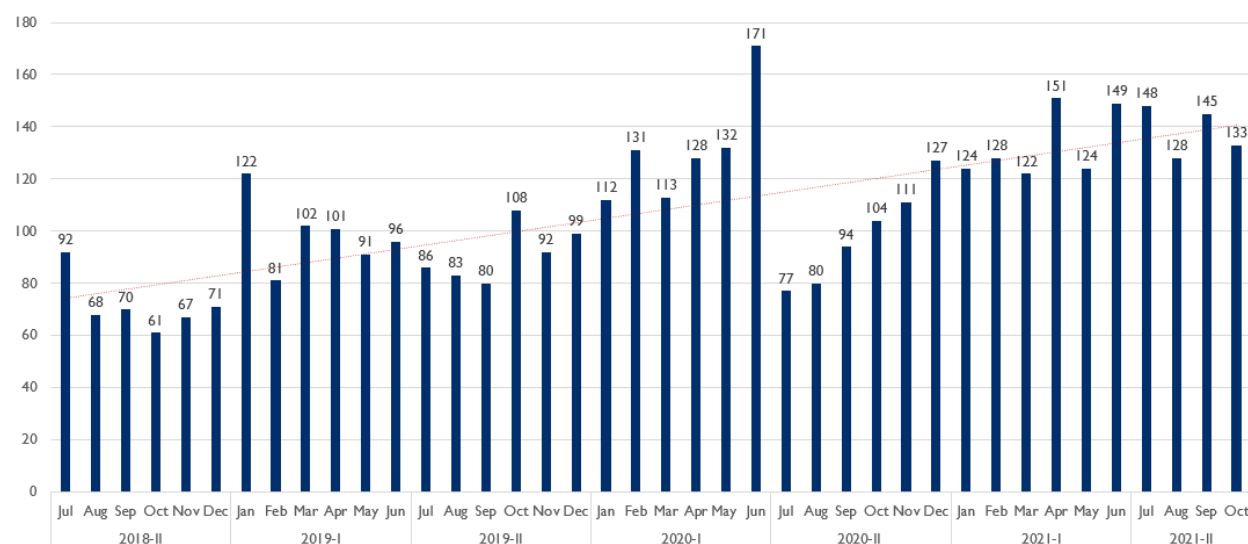


Figure 3: Reported weapons-related injuries in Haiti, 2019–2021

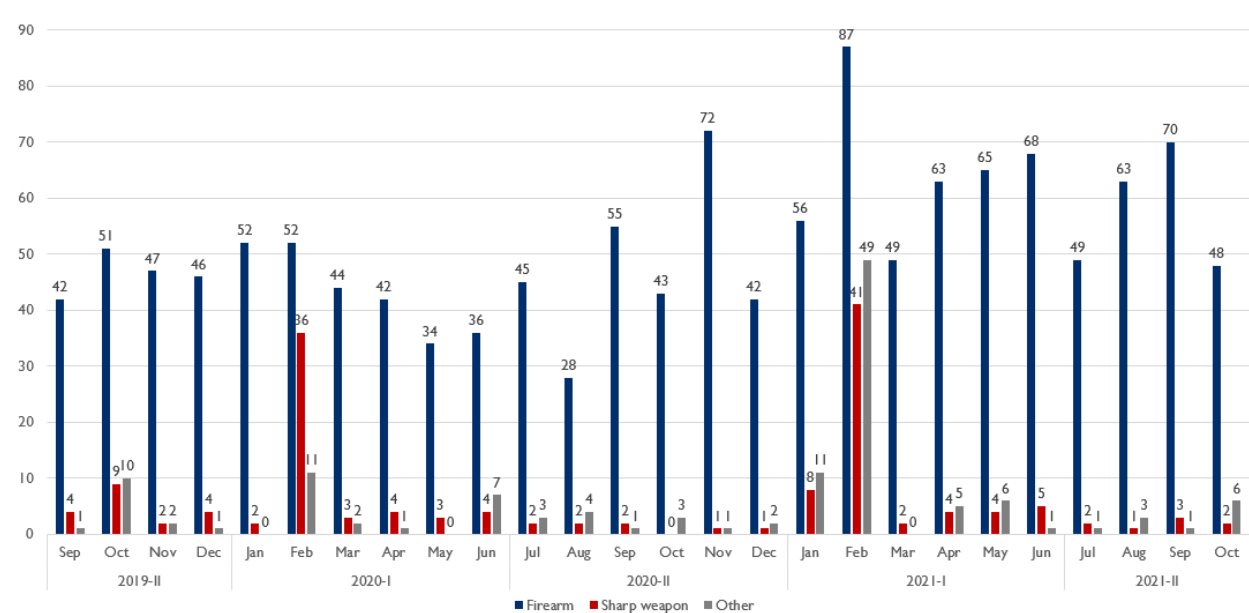
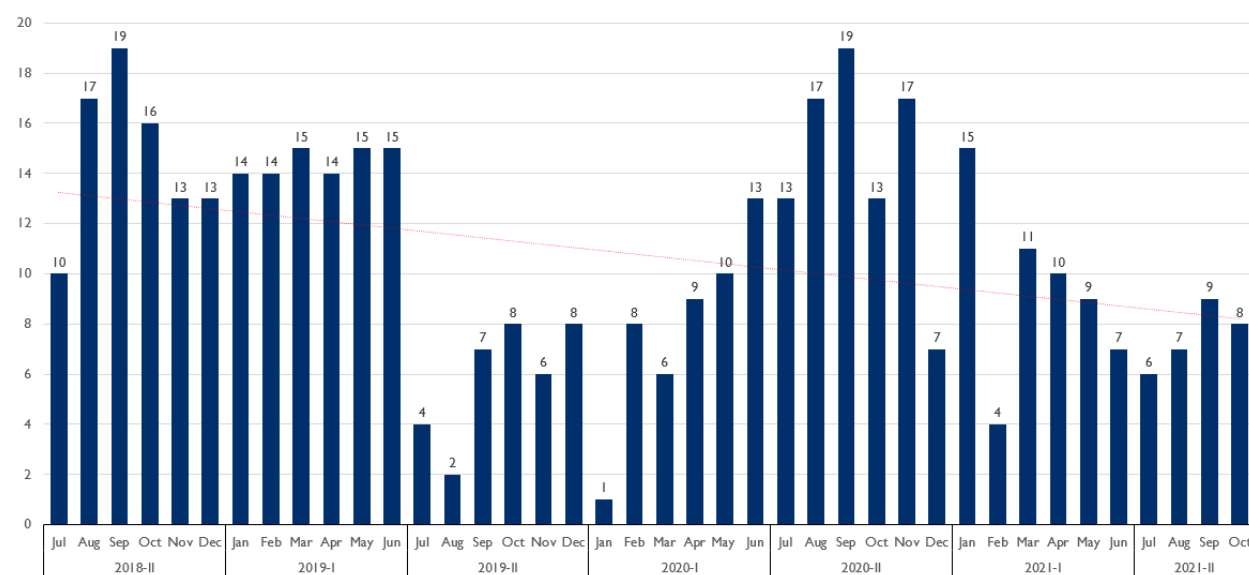


Figure 4: Reported rapes in Haiti, 2018–2021



Given ongoing security developments, 2022 could likely eclipse 2021 levels of criminality. For example, journalists have compiled hospital (and related) data for various periods of 2022, which indicate alarming increases in these crimes.¹⁴ External crime victimization surveys may provide more accurate data than the HNP, because they do not rely on reporting to authorities. Among CSA survey respondents who experienced crime in the last year, the most frequently experienced crime was theft (14.7 percent),

¹⁴ ABC News. 2022. “Gangs strangle Haiti’s capital as deaths, kidnappings soar.” Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/gangs-strangle-haitis-capital-deaths-kidnappings-soar-84892283>.

followed by threat of violence (7.7 percent), home invasion (7 percent), extortion (6.7 percent), physical attack (6.6 percent), and sexual assault (0.7 percent).

Official crime statistics also do a poor job of capturing domestic violence and do not reflect the impact of spending more time inside on domestic violence. Further, rape and other forms of sexual violence are rarely reported in Haiti.

CITIZEN'S PERCEPTIONS OF INSECURITY AND CRIME: The LAPOP 2020 Haitian National Survey found that 60 percent of respondents felt some degree of insecurity, with 26 percent feeling unsafe and 34 percent feeling very unsafe. With respect to the team's CSA survey, 39 percent of respondents indicated that their neighborhood was either very unsafe or somewhat unsafe, nearly 31 percent reported feeling very or somewhat unsafe while taking public transportation, and approximately 21 percent reported feeling unsafe while shopping.

Virtually all CSA interviewees and FGD participants noted a rise in insecurity and expressed concerns such as fear of leaving their home. The assessment team also found that increased perceptions of insecurity were attributed to greater visibility of gangs and to a lesser extent, increased kidnappings. Interviews suggest that Haitians are increasingly concerned about vandalism, break-ins, thefts, shootings, and extortion. Among CSA survey respondents, between 10 and 20 percent believe that shootings, vandalism, and extortion occur either very often or fairly often in their neighborhoods (see Figure 5). Fear of violence and insecurity has also led Haitians to change their lifestyles. Among CSA survey respondents, 35 percent do not leave their house at night, 27 percent do not leave their home for recreation and walks, 22 percent do not let their children play outside, and 21 percent do not leave home alone (see Figure 6).

Figure 5: CSA survey responses to “How common is each event in your neighborhood?”

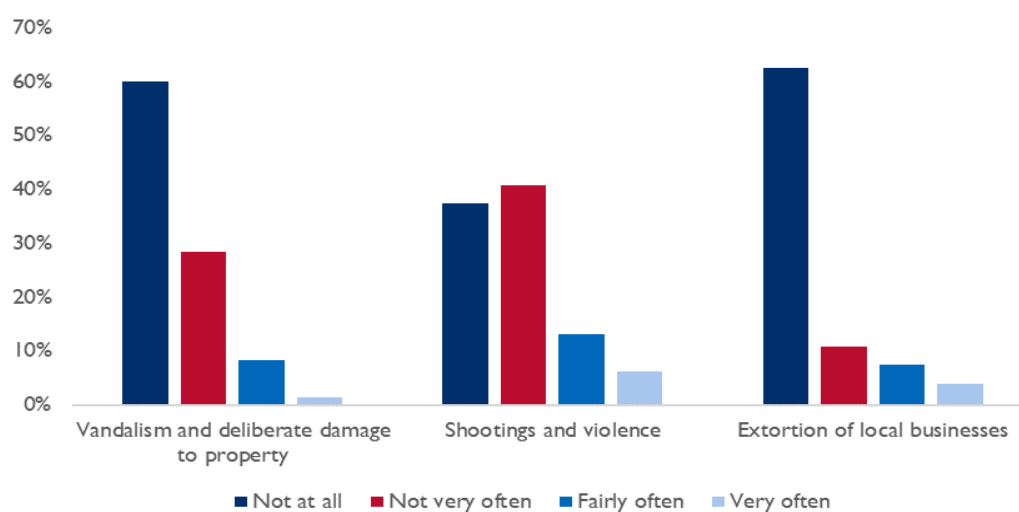
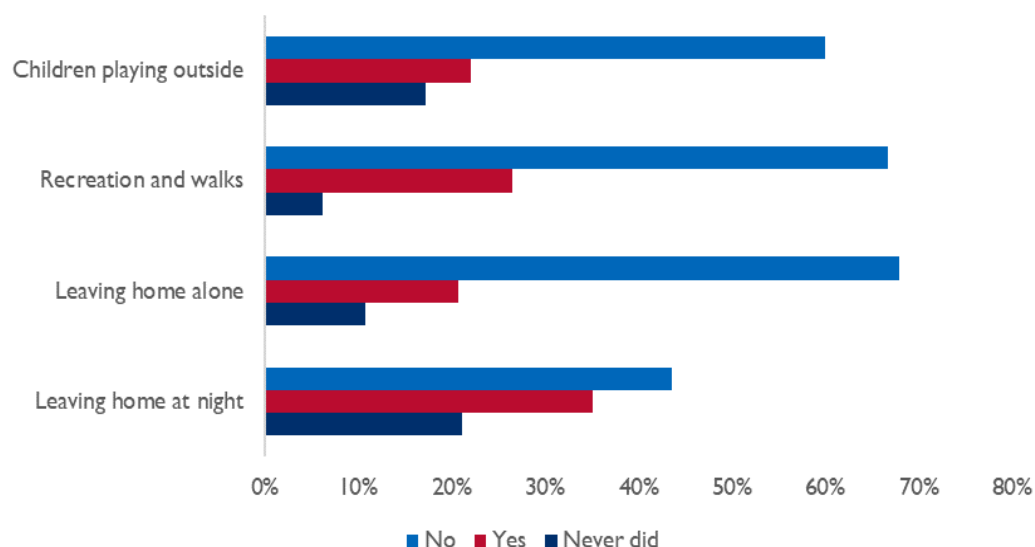


Figure 6: CSA survey responses to “Have you modified any habits or activities due to insecurity in the last 12 months?”



KIs and FGDs also provide insight into how perceptions of violence and insecurity have changed in the last two decades, and how Haitians are adapting to current violence and insecurity. The assessment team found that Haitians believed both the intensity and distribution of violence had increased to unprecedented levels – not only in Port-au-Prince, but also in other cities and regions. They attribute much of this increase to the growth and expansion of gangs. One citizen security specialist highlighted such changes over the last two decades at the regional level: “The regions were safe and quiet by and large, except maybe Gonaïve. Port-au-Prince, though, was never really showing gains. The regions were safe because they had real community leaders, they worked together and took care of themselves and each other. It wasn’t because of police presence since there was little of that. [...] There is no reason to expect the insecurity in rural areas to do anything other than increase.”

In sum, official crime statistics do not match on-the-ground perceptions that insecurity and violence have reached unprecedented levels. Haitians recognize that the HNP lacks the capacity to give an accurate picture of the true state of crime, and that much crime goes unreported.

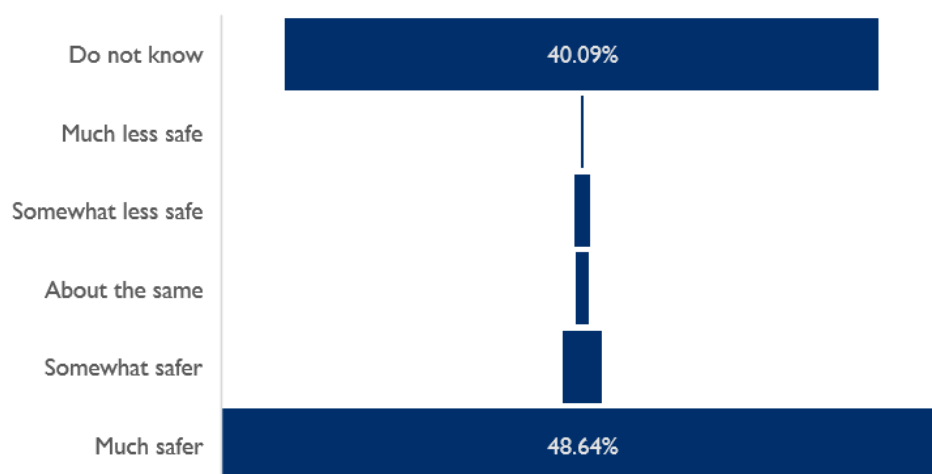
Assessment Question: What is the strength and nature of the relationship between gangs and violence/citizen security?

Many Haitian survey respondents (as well as Haiti observers interviewed) expressed the view that the growing frequency and severity of violence over the last few years was tied to the uncontrolled increase in gang activity. However, official data do not reflect whether perpetrators are gang-affiliated, and Haitians are sometimes uncertain about who is behind certain acts of violence.

The assessment team found that many Haitians were particularly concerned about gangs in their neighborhoods. In the LAPOP survey, 92 percent said that gangs did not provide security, 97 percent reported that gangs did not help with access to basic goods, and 89 percent said that gangs did not act as community leaders. Youth gang members were named as perpetrators of violence by 66 percent of youth respondents and 73 percent of older respondents in the LAPOP survey.

In the CSA survey, 11 percent noted that gangs were seen fairly often or very often in their neighborhood, while the vast majority thought gangs were harmful for their neighborhood. However, only 11 and 9 percent agreed or strongly agreed that gangs were responsible for violence and theft, respectively. At the same time, if gangs disappeared from their neighborhoods tomorrow, 49 percent said they would feel somewhat or much safer, while 40 percent said they did not know how they would feel in that scenario (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: CSA survey responses to “How would you feel if gangs disappeared from your neighborhood tomorrow?”



A range of CSA interviewees (including those from the government official, gang leader, donor, police, and community member categories) recognized that gangs were responsible for a significant amount of violence and crime. Crimes that respondents attributed to gangs included kidnapping, armed robbery, homicide, sexual assault, and forms of organized crime such as drug and arms trafficking. A GOH official acknowledged that “the proliferation of armed gangs has led to an exponential increase in the kidnapping, armed robbery and spectacular assassination levels. Fundamentally, [these increases in crime] are due to the growth of armed gangs, because all parts of the country are governed by armed gangs.” A police officer noted the level of violence committed by gangs, stating, “Now gangs are the main actors in regards to criminal acts ... as I said things have changed drastically. They kill, they rape, they kidnap, they racket, they even burn people. There are no limits anymore.”

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GANGS, VIOLENCE, AND SECURITY: Surveys, KIs, and FGDs highlight a perceived strong relationship between gangs and violence. However, official statistics do not show whether crime perpetrators are gang members. That said, about 40 percent of CSA survey respondents reported that they believed gangs were responsible for violence and theft in their neighborhoods.¹⁵

Regardless of official statistics, it appears that a variety of Haitians perceive the rise of gangs to be accompanied by an increase in instances of violence and its level of severity. CSA respondents, including gang members themselves, the HNP, GOH officials, and donors attested to the responsibility of gangs for extraordinary violence. It is, therefore, evident that gangs have played a major role in increasing violence and insecurity over (at least) the last 2 years.

¹⁵ This figure excludes the approximately 76 percent of respondents who responded, “not applicable,” which was the answer choice for those who did not have gangs in their area.

CSA interviews also indicate that citizens in Port-au-Prince fear the violence associated with gangs and have adapted their lives to the potential of becoming a victim. Increasing control of gangs over neighborhoods, cities, and rural areas has degraded the quality of life for regular Haitians. However, they also fear police operations against gangs, which disrupt “normal life” in the city. In comparison, violence in Les Cayes has not risen to the levels of Port-au-Prince and the Western Region, but residents have noted an alarming increase in youth violence.

Assessment Question: How are violence and gangs distributed across geographies, ethnic groups, social classes, and economic and industry contexts?

Although official data are unreliable, they show that the Ouest department, where gang activities are considered the most pronounced, is disproportionately affected by violence and crime. Overall, violence and gangs both appear to be concentrated in urbanized areas of Haiti, and gangs seem focused on major economic infrastructure (e.g., ports, main transportation arteries, markets). The assessment team also found that all strata of Haitian society are affected by and at risk of violence today. Men are disproportionately victims of homicides and attacks with weapons, and women are disproportionately victims of rape.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF VIOLENCE: Official statistics produced by the HNP, with support from the United Nations (UN), provide a sense of geographical distribution of violence and crime. They show that most violence and crime are concentrated in the Ouest department where Port-au-Prince is located. In addition, one CSA respondent from the judiciary indicated that at least 100,000 persons were displaced at the southern border of Port-au-Prince due to insecurity and criminality. Among the other departments, the most severely affected are Artibonite, Nord, Nord-Ouest, and Sud, depending on the crime. The exception to concentration of crime in the Ouest department is rape, where incidences are distributed almost equally across the departments.

Relatively urbanized departments show a higher concentration of intentional homicides than more rural departments. As shown in Figure 8, in 2021, the Ouest department had 76 percent of the nation’s intentional homicides, Artibonite department had 4 percent, Nord department 6 percent, and Sud department 3 percent. In addition, intentional homicides are associated with gangs, which have a greater concentration in the Ouest department. As shown in Figure 9, in 2021, the Ouest department had 84 percent of kidnappings, followed by Artibonite with 9 percent. Distribution of kidnappings is closely associated with gang prevalence.

Figure 8: Reported intentional homicides, disaggregated by department (2021)

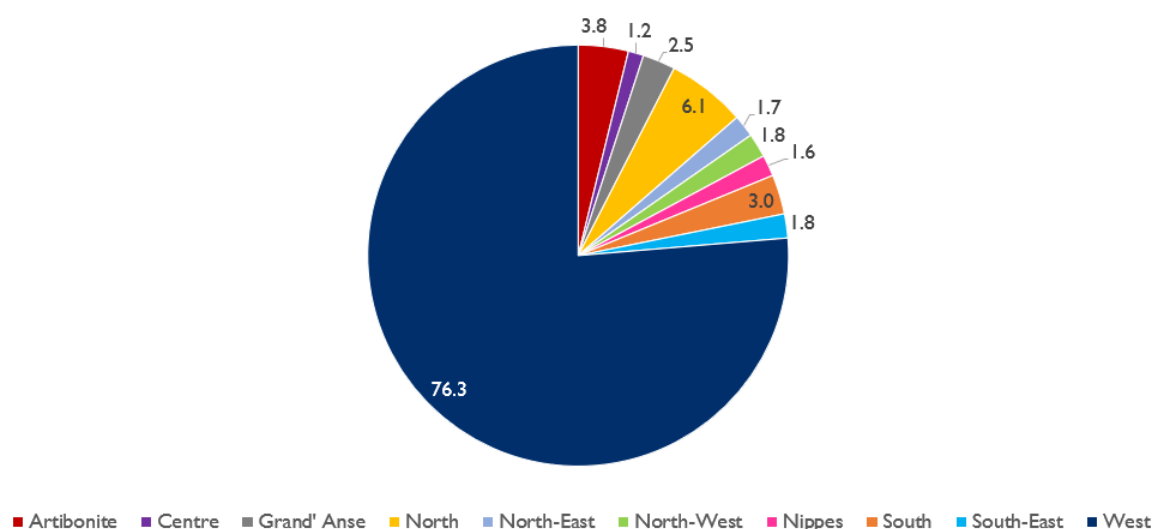
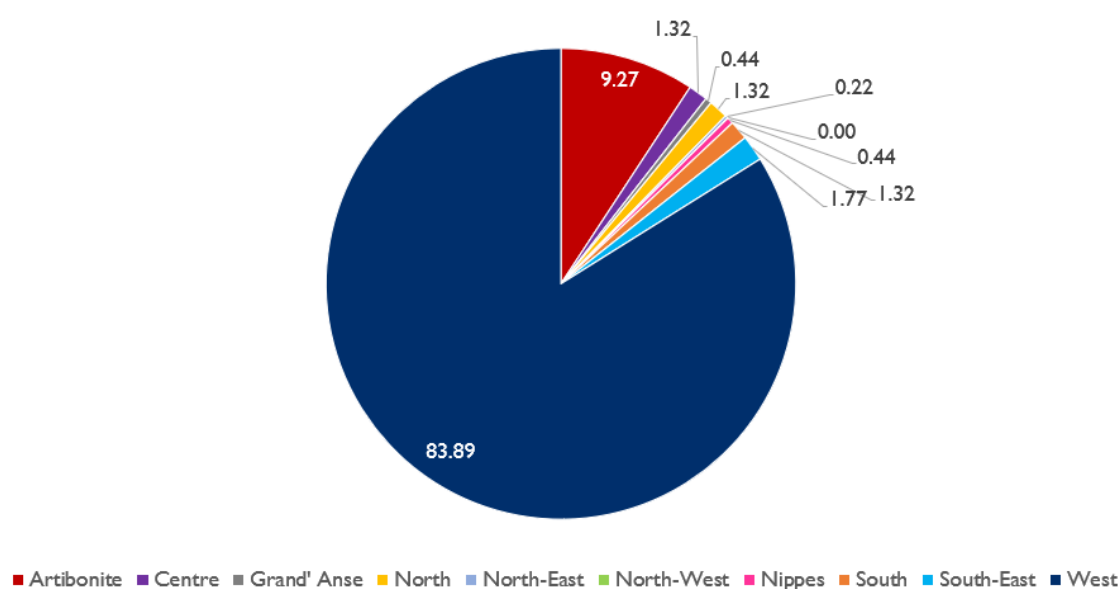


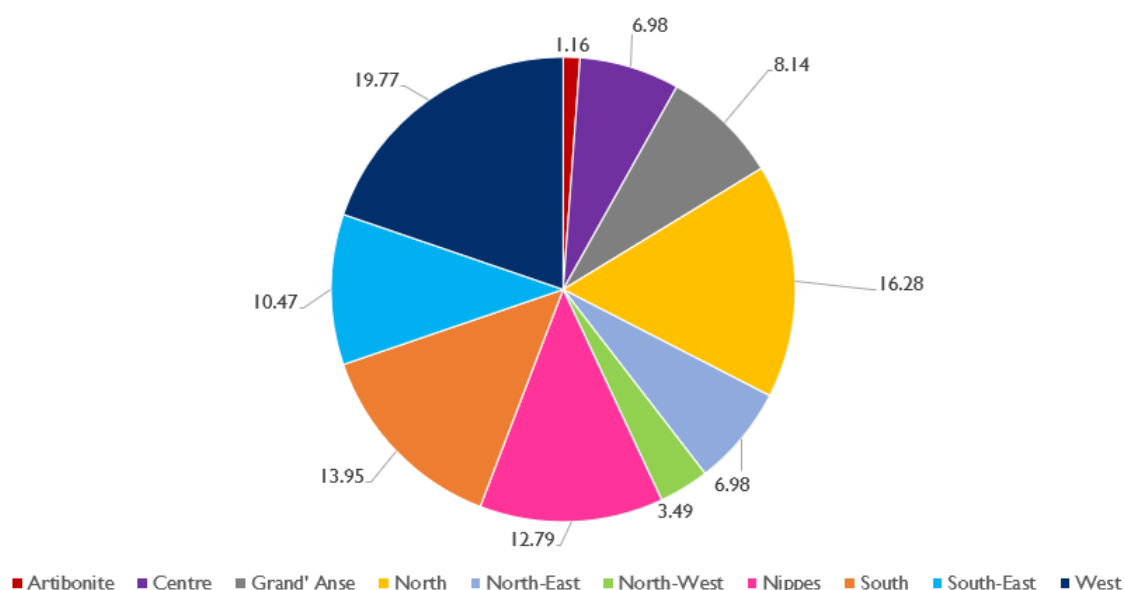
Figure 9: Reported kidnappings, disaggregated by department (2021)



About two-thirds (66 percent) of weapons-related injuries in 2021 were found in the Ouest department, followed by 8.2 percent in Nord-Ouest, 7.1 percent in Artibonite, and 5.6 percent in Sud-Est. These statistics mirror general criminality and gang activity at the department-level.

As shown in Figure 10, the largest percentage of reported rapes in 2021 was in the Ouest department (20 percent), but other departments have equally high percentages. While smaller numbers of rapes are reported overall and reported levels have generally decreased over the last 2 years, these data show that rapes are not strongly related to gangs or urbanization.

Figure 10: Reported rapes, disaggregated by department (2021)



GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF GANGS: Kills and FGDs noted that gangs have expanded their reach from the slums of Port-au-Prince to other parts of the city and surrounding areas. Satellite gangs, who have links to those in the capital city, are found in other towns and some rural areas. Rural–urban migration has helped certain gangs in Port-au-Prince to grow, according to one citizen security expert who indicated: “[Port-au-Prince] slums are the core areas of gang activities, and this happened during the rural–urban migration. In Cite Soleil, a lot of people come from the south. In Martissant, people are typically from Jacmel [...] Village de Dieu and Grand Ravine have ties in Les Cayes.”

Gangs in Port-au-Prince seek control of areas where they can gain control of resources and provide services to political and economic elites. Markets, ports, and commercial areas have experienced severe fighting among gangs. One civil society respondent highlighted the associated negative economic impact: “Huge conflict around the ports played out through the gangs – discouraging customers to go down to some ports. La Saline market area is a huge hub for commercial traffic and big revenue for gangs. Currently, the understanding is that G9 gets two-thirds of the revenue and one-third goes to another gang.” Additionally, gangs are taking control of roads with the greatest commercial traffic, such as the road out of Martissant to the South. This has complicated travel routes for Haitian citizens, commerce, and the delivery of emergency assistance to the South following the 2021 earthquake.

However, gangs do not exercise total control of specific geographic areas. Their approach is strategic, based on where they can gain the most (likely in places where the state is absent). One Les Cayes respondent noted: “They aren’t in every locality, generally. They aren’t in every little part of a community. [...] They are generally in strategic areas. And the advantage they have is not only that they are in strategic areas, but they are in areas where the state is mostly absent. That way, they represent the state.” Notably, one local citizen security expert addressed the impact of gang control on community life: “400 Mawozo has control of four communes. They control the dynamic of a community. Village de Dieu recruits a lot of soldiers. They control all of Martissant. How could elections happen in this area?”

DISTRIBUTION OF VIOLENCE AND GANGS ACROSS ETHNIC GROUPS AND SOCIOECONOMIC CLASSES: Kills and FGDs did not address ethnic differences directly, although they did find that primary

targets of gang violence are rich, ethnically mixed families and that some gangs have allied with political leaders from such families. Interviewees noted that as gangs have grown in power and geographic control, they have expanded targets to include the middle class and even poor blacks.

Some gangs are becoming wealthy based on money collected from activities affecting people from all socioeconomic classes, including increased kidnappings, extortion of business owners, and drug trafficking. One business owner indicated: “The little merchants are being threatened every day. It’s not just people with fancy cars and big houses. A little merchant may make 500 to 1,000 [Haitian] gourdes (HTG) [USD 4.50–9.00] in a day and then held up at gunpoint and that money is taken.” Likewise, disadvantaged populations face additional vulnerabilities to threats of violence.

In addition, most respondents believe the breakdown of the Haitian political system is associated with socioeconomic elites’ use of gangs for political and economic purposes. To this point, one respondent highlighted: “What the elite thought would be cheap and easy became complicated and morphed into a situation that is expensive and uncontrollable.” Despite threats of violence to the upper class, the assessment team found that most victims are from vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.

DISTRIBUTION OF VIOLENCE AND GANGS BY SEX: Official HNP statistics show that men far surpass women as victims of violent crime (apart from rape), although data could be skewed due to gendered differences in crime reporting. Nevertheless, these statistics provide important insights on the sex of violence victims in recent years. The following three figures show the sex composition of victims of intentional homicides, weapons-related injuries, and rape. See Figure 11, Figure 12, and Figure 13 below.

Figure 11: Reported intentional homicides, disaggregated by sex and month, 2020–2021

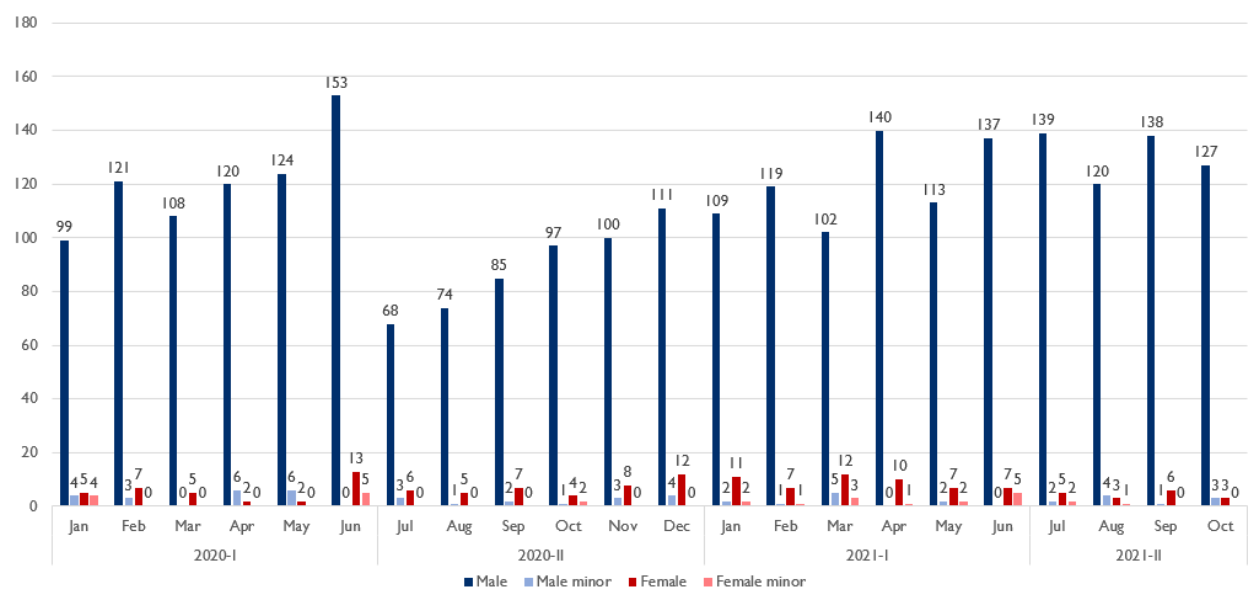


Figure 12: Reported weapons-related injuries, disaggregated by sex and month, 2019–2021

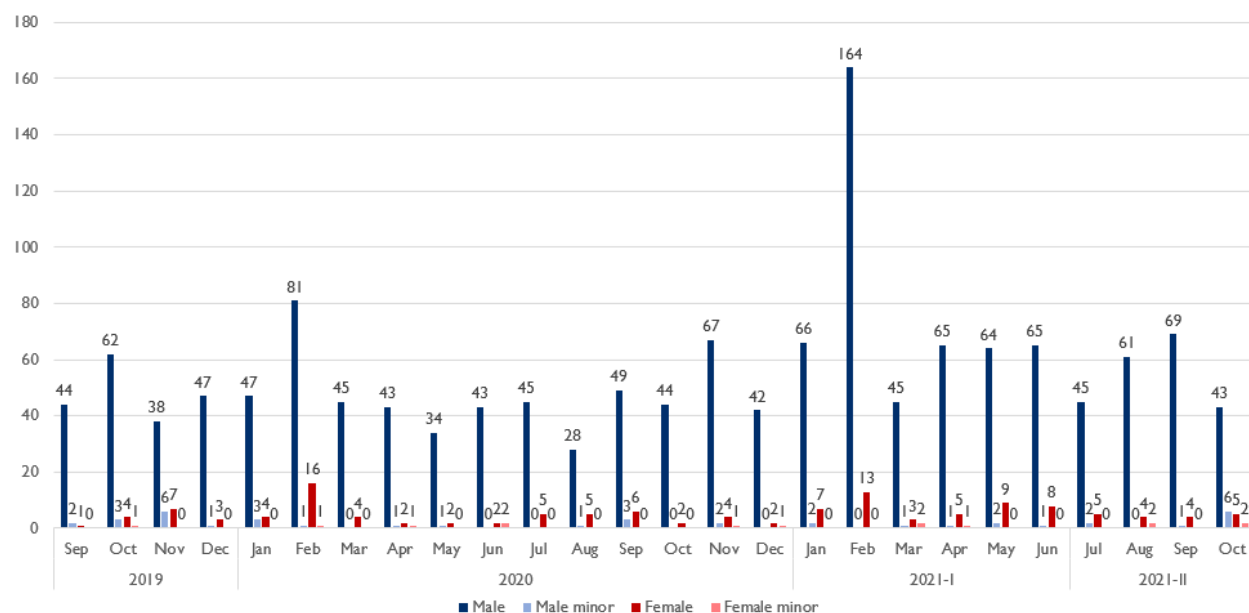
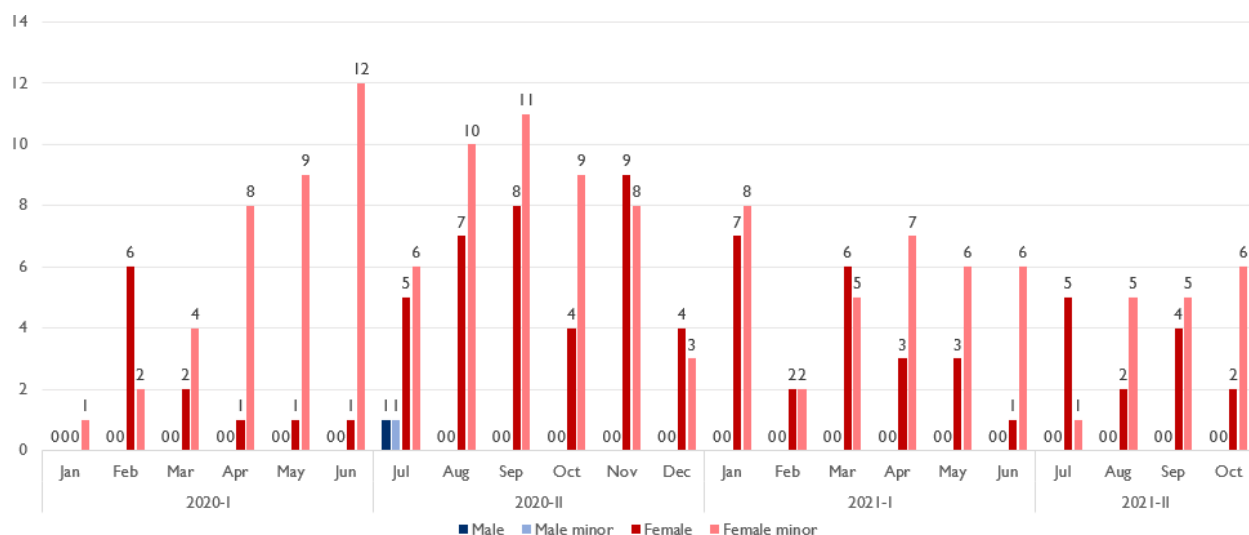


Figure 13: Reported rapes, disaggregated by sex and month, 2020–2021



GANGS, CRIME, AND SOCIETY^{16,17}

As detailed in this section, gangs and *baz* are not a new phenomenon in Haiti, although their overwhelming role in Haitian society today is undisputed (and perhaps unmatched throughout the country's history). A Haitian journalist characterized the expansion and magnitude of gangs in the

¹⁶ To complement the CSA, LACLEAR issued a Grant under Contract (GUC) for InSight Crime to conduct a detailed analysis and mapping of Haiti's criminal dynamics (with a focus on gangs). While the CSA report addresses gangs in this section and throughout, the InSight Crime report provides a more in-depth analysis in line with these research questions. The InSight Crime final report is available separately; please contact the designated LACLEAR point of contact for additional information.

¹⁷ A summary brief of the InSight Crime analysis is available here: https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00ZF3H.pdf.

current context as such: “Ten [10] years ago, Haiti had few criminal gangs. By mid-2021, there were at least 169 active gangs in Haiti, operating mostly in the Port-au-Prince area.”¹⁸

The assessment team’s literature review and qualitative data provided insights into the structure and operations of Haitian gangs. Haitian gangs engage in a variety of criminal activities, including extortion, kidnapping, political services (such as ensuring votes for politicians among a community), security services, and trafficking of drugs, weapons, and persons. These activities serve primarily to fund operations and maintain or expand territorial control. However, the activities gangs undertake depend on their organizational and tactical sophistication, their existing territorial control, and political patronage, among other factors. As a result, certain gangs appear particularly focused on a specific subset of criminal activities (e.g., 400 Mawazo and kidnapping). Formal gang alliances, such as *G9 an Fanmi e Alye*, are another recent development which has reshaped the landscape.

In terms of geographic scope, the assessment team found that gangs are not evenly distributed in the country, as evidenced by survey data and official crime statistics. Port-au-Prince bears the brunt of gang presence, criminal activity, and insecurity. Kidnappings and gang expansions have led to increasing parts of the city becoming unsafe, as CSA respondents reiterated. However, other parts of the country, especially border cities, ports, and other large cities, increasingly face similar issues. Gangs appear to use their personal connections with other parts of the country to gain such territory.

Resulting from expanded gang control, the assessment team found that levels of crime and violence are extremely high, few citizens feel safe, and all societal actors must factor gangs into their decision-making. In line with these factors, Haitian gangs have become political actors through their influence over elites and the territories under their control. The corrupt nexus of gangs, big business, and politicians dominates the country and disempowers the majority of Haitian citizens.

Assessment Question: How are gangs structured?

Gang leaders tend to have strong control over the group and members and drive the gang’s strategic and tactical decisions. Beyond leaders and members, gangs often also use non-members in neighborhoods they control for specific tasks. Due to a lack of widely accepted definition for a *baz*, the line between gangs and *baz* is blurred. Formal gang alliances (such as G9 and Family) are another recent development which has reshaped the security landscape in Port-au-Prince.

BAZ AND GANGS: One must first distinguish between two groupings of individuals: *baz* and gangs. Security expert respondents, both domestic and international, agree that these groups typically function at two extremities of a single continuum. The *baz* are primarily social (not necessarily criminal) groups. The term “gang” refers to a criminal group, which is typically armed.

In its pure and idealistic sense, the Haitian *baz* is a group of youths in a community. Such groups originally came together to advance democracy, social and political discussion, and positive civic action. In the 1990s, following a military crackdown in poor neighborhoods on supporters of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, many of the *baz* became cells of neighborhood resistance and armed themselves. The relationship between the *baz* and their communities, their dependence on urban tactics to respond to persecution by authorities, and extrajudicial killings of their local community leaders set many of the

¹⁸ Le Nouvelliste. 2021. “Les différents gangs auraient plus de 3 000 soldats et autant d’armes, selon les autorités haïtiennes.” (July 2). Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://lenouvelliste.com/article/230190/les-differents-gangs-auraient-plus-de-3-000-soldats-et-autant-darmes-selon-les-autorites-haitiennes>.

baz on a path toward a gang-like structure. Furthermore, *baz* members are typically unemployed and/or have dropped out of school. *Baz* members may be susceptible to bullying or exploitation by gang members, and some of them end up joining gangs.

In most countries, gangs are criminal groups that come together to commit crimes. Any anti-government or political posture assumed by gangs usually arises from their conflicts with the government during their criminal activities. However, the origin of Haiti's gangs and the anti-government posture of many of Haiti's gangs today derives from the transformation in the 1990s of *baz* into gangs and the antagonistic relationship that developed during the military coup.

GANG STRUCTURE: Haiti's criminal gangs can be grouped in three different ways: location, ideology, and crime. In terms of location, many gangs have a geographical home community. Geographic identity can also give members a sense of partisan (but not necessarily ideological) affiliation, because many neighborhood gangs are linked to local political power structures. In terms of ideology, most gangs claim to be driven by grievance, injustice, and social and political issues. Often, gang leaders use their ideological positions to spur favor with disgruntled individuals they want support from, such as youths they want to recruit or communities they seek refuge in.

Gangs use a variety of criminal tactics to meet their economic and/or ideological purposes. Gangs have different degrees of organizational and tactical sophistication, with a wide range of activities including extortion, kidnapping, political and security services, human trafficking, and drug trafficking. Furthermore, a former prisoner explained that gangs in Haiti differ from those in other countries in there is less focus on identity: "Gangs in Haiti are not like the U.S. or even the [Dominican Republic]. It's not like Latin Kings and 42's or in the U.S. with Hells Angels. They are not recruiting far and wide. It is not so much an identity thing. Perhaps it is more like Crips and Bloods, in that they do start at the neighborhood level, but there is no deliberate recruitment or organizing going on in prison. That's not how it works. These are mostly territorial gangs."

The strategies and tactics of gangs are defined by their leaders, who determine operations and manage money and weapons. Several respondents indicated that gang leadership is fluid. Some gangs operate independently, according to a local citizen security expert, who gave the example of 400 Mawozo: "400 Mawazo does not have a political affiliation and stays away from other gangs to focus on kidnappings." However, many gangs have become allies to fight other gangs and the state. One of the largest groupings is G9 and Family, with Jimmy Cherizier "Barbecue," a former police officer as spokesman.

Assessment Question: How do gangs operate?

Gangs in Haiti are involved in a variety of criminal activities, including extortion, kidnapping, political and security services, and trafficking of drugs, weapons, and persons. These activities serve primarily to fund gang operations and maintain or expand territorial control. However, the type of activities gangs undertake depends on their organizational and tactical sophistication, existing territorial control, political patronage, and other factors. As a result, certain gangs appear particularly focused on a specific subset of criminal activities (e.g., 400 Mawazo and kidnapping).

OPERATIONS: Gangs in Haiti operate at two levels: (1) using criminal violence and threats to fund their operations (as previously detailed), and (2) maintaining or expanding territory. As previously noted, gangs have also taken control of roads and ports, which enables them to establish checkpoints, facilitate trafficking of drugs and weapons, and profit from the movement of goods. For several gangs, kidnapping has become their major funding source. For gangs to profit from kidnapping, they must have total

control of some territory to prevent police from entering. One police respondent reaffirmed this reality, stating that “These places run by the gangs for kidnapped victims can host several victims at the same time. Today, the gang strongholds are very difficult or impossible to penetrate without risking the life of the hostages and other civilians.”

WEAPONS: To engage in any criminal business, gangs must have weapons. Interviews suggest that while gangs help traffic weapons themselves, they may also receive arms from politicians seeking their support. The financial benefit of controlling and expanding territory also drives fighting between gangs, as well as conflict over resources such as arms.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: Gangs must balance supporting the population in the areas they control and protecting their territory. Gangs may seek to provide basic services to communities such as street cleaning, or provision of goods and security, as noted by respondents. Other respondents noted that gangs control the population and restrict movement: “They start limiting people going from one area to another. The people in this area can’t go into that one. From there, they start developing ways to resist each other, so you fall into a situation where one area is fighting with another.”

Assessment Question: What is the geographical reach of gangs?

Gangs in Haiti remain primarily urban. Port-au-Prince is the epicenter of gangs vying for control of neighborhoods, as much of the city is already under gang control. Gangs are present in other major cities, but not at the same scale or with the same level of control seen in Port-au-Prince. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some Port-au-Prince gangs increasingly work to establish a presence in other Haitian cities, often through the existing personal networks from internal migration. In addition, certain gangs appear to have cross-border reach, particularly in the Dominican Republic, but also the United States through deportees.

Gangs in Haiti are continually vying for territory. The estimated 150 gangs in Haiti are centered in Port-au-Prince and its surrounding area, as well as other cities and some rural areas.¹⁹ A citizen security expert spoke of the efforts of gangs in Port-au-Prince to expand throughout the country, saying that “The gangs are expanding. Mini-gangs are being created outside Port-au-Prince. They want to create a national network.” The assessment team found that gangs were consolidating their control over the Port-au-Prince region and extending their reach to other parts of Haiti. The amount of territory controlled by gangs has increased dramatically during the last few years, as detailed below. The presence of gangs and the violence they bring to a neighborhood has forced many people to flee, so the population of neighborhoods under gang control has decreased.

As of May 2022, the G9 and Family federation of gangs controls the following neighborhoods: the Belecourt sector and Belekou in the Cité Soleil district of Port-au-Prince; the Chancerelles, Delmas, La Saline, Martissant, and Pont Rouge neighborhoods; the Fontamara suburb of Port-au-Prince; the Waf Jérémie slum; and Rue Saint-Martin and Rue Porcelaine. The G9 is headquartered in Waf Jérémie, and 11 gangs in Port-au-Prince maintain friendly relations with the G9.²⁰ Outside the G9 are gangs like the Fanmi Lavalas in Cité Soleil and 400 Mawozo, which is centered in Croix-des-Bouquets and also

¹⁹ Sanon, Evens and Danica Coto. 2021. “Surge in violence rattles Haiti as poverty, fear deepens.” (April 16). Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/surge-violence-rattles-haiti-poverty-fear-deepens-77115520>.

²⁰ InSight Crime. 2022. “G9 and Family.” (July 18). Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://insightcrime.org/caribbean-organized-crime-news/g9-family-profile/>.

operates in Fonds-Verettes, Ganthier, and Thomasseau. In Croix-des-Bouquets, the 400 Mawozo controls Canaan and the only road leading to northern Haiti. It also has a presence in Malpasse, which is the main border station with the Dominican Republic, in addition to some territory in the Dominican Republic.²¹ In April and May 2022, 400 Mawozo undertook a major action against the Chen Mechan gang, a member of the G9, and captured significant territory from them. The G9 fought back and stopped 400 Mawozo, which was supported by another federation of gangs, G-PEP. Since then, 400 Mawozo decided to join G-PEP.²²

Furthermore, a human rights actor noted that violence was increasing in some areas around the country as gangs tried to take control, stating: “Cap Haitian is not the same as Port-au-Prince. There are sporadic acts, such as attacks on houses or stores. It is not like in Port-au-Prince, where these crimes occur every day. Also, the bandits are displacing and operating in other places, such as Les Cayes, Artibonite, Northwest, and even Jérémie.” A donor official agreed that gangs were expanding, but seemed less threatening to rural areas: “I have no recollection of gangs in the countryside having running gun battles like in Port-au-Prince.”

Assessment Question: How do gangs recruit and retain their members?

Gangs typically focus their recruitment efforts on young men from the territories they control. However, another source of recruitment is migration within Haiti or back to Haiti (especially deportees). There is typically no formal recruitment process. Anecdotally, recruitment methods include a mix of coercion, support, and manipulation, plus the financial and status appeal of gang members. Retention is primarily tied to a lack of competing economic alternatives, especially ones as lucrative as gang membership. Strong control over gang territory also means an exit is risky for members and possibly their family.

GANG RECRUITMENT: The assessment team received insightful comments on gang recruitment from potential gang recruits, gang members, and community members. *Baz* are primarily social groups (some of which are armed), which attract children and youth who are out of school and unemployed. Because the line between *baz* and gangs is blurred, gangs recruit from *baz* members and other youth. Gang membership is an aspiration for many youth in gang-controlled areas, and gang members serve as role models. Respondents also highlighted the role family structure (i.e., parenting, upbringing), gang socialization, and lack of economic opportunity play in youth’s susceptibility to gang recruitment.

Several responses highlighted the economic and security incentives that may draw youth to gangs. A local citizen security expert highlighted: “In areas where there is a great deal of misery, unemployed young people are potential candidates for gang membership. There is no formal recruitment process. Some gang leaders help out communities in order to attract young people who are influenced by the ‘easy’ life of gang members.” Similarly, a judge expressed concern about the ease of recruitment among youth: “In certain areas of Haiti, some young are obligated to join a gang. They are forced to do so if they live in the neighborhood and their parents don’t have other homes. They are in a precarious situation, with nothing to eat, no work, nothing at all. If they don’t participate, they will be executed by the bandits. That is why a woman victim of rape will still participate in a gang. In the neighborhood where she lives, she will be obligated to participate. If not, she will be executed.” One community leader

²¹ InSight Crime. 2022. “400 Mawozo.” (March 23). Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://insightcrime.org/caribbean-organized-crime-news/400-mawozo/>.

²² InSight Crime. 2022. “Why Haiti’s Gang War Keeps on Getting Worse.” (May 20). Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://insightcrime.org/news/why-haiti-gang-war-keeps-on-getting-worse/>.

in Les Cayes stressed that rural–urban immigration to the capital plays a factor: “Youth from the South are moving to Port-au-Prince in search of a better life and opportunities. When they cannot find work and cannot pay for food, they are easily drawn to making money in criminal activities.”

The assessment team found that some gangs recruited girls and women, but others avoided doing so. One gang leader told the assessment team, “We are not comfortable with recruiting girls. We do not want to have a girl in the middle of us during fights.” Some women join to play supporting roles for male fighters, while some women join gangs after being gang-raped.

GANG RECRUITMENT METHODS: Recruitment often includes a mix of coercion, support, and manipulation of anger against broader societal issues. Several respondents highlighted heavy-handed recruitment methods (e.g., provision of arms, threatening violence, generating fear in communities) as primary tactics. A young woman from Croix-des-Bouquets also noted that gang members recruited young people by providing them with gifts, such as money or clothes. One gang/baz leader said that there is no selection process for members other than possessing a commitment to community service.

IMPACT OF DEPORTATION AND U.S. GANGS ON GANG MEMBERSHIP: Haitians who seek asylum in the United States or live without documentation are at risk of being deported to Haiti. Some of these individuals have experience with Haitian gangs in the United States, such as Zoe Pound, which was founded in Miami in 1992. Others have facilitated weapons shipments to Haitian gangs.²³ Those deported to Haiti have difficulty returning to their old life or making a new life for themselves; they frequently live in poor neighborhoods and are welcomed by gangs who take advantage of the skills and knowledge gained in the United States. One judge stated that deportees contributed to the growth of gangs in Haiti: “Gangs appeared in Haiti when the practice began, where the American justice system deported to Haiti members of gangs who were convicted in the U.S. [...] They have a hard time adapting to Haiti, especially since the police have records of their deportations and convictions. [...] Not having other skills than banditry, the deportees go to the poor neighborhoods, where they are helped to become criminals by those already engaged in criminality and violence.” In particular, a local citizen security expert highlighted that many 400 Mawozo members are deportees with contacts in the United States and the Dominican Republic.

RETAINING GANG MEMBERS: FGDs highlighted that the most important factor in gang retention was the lack of an economic alternative. For most gang members, it would be virtually impossible to earn a relatively similar income outside of gang involvement, given the state of the Haitian economy, especially if they are poor and uneducated. Gangs also retain members through intimidation, threat of violence to members or their family, and provision of services. Gang members who seek to exit and move elsewhere also face challenges such as becoming a target by police or broader gang networks.

Assessment Question: What does gang exit look like?

Gang exit is widely viewed as difficult and risky, particularly for those at higher levels. Members are typically retained through economic and security incentives. The main option for gang exit (as indicated during CSA interviews) appears to be fleeing. Nonetheless, a few religious leaders reported that they had facilitated gang exits, although this space appears to be closing.

²³ WLRN. 2021. “U.S. criminal complaint alleges South Floridians smuggled guns to powerful Haitian gang.” (November 2). Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://www.wlrn.org/news/2021-11-02/u-s-criminal-complaint-alleges-south-floridians-smuggled-guns-to-powerful-haitian-gang>.

As detailed, gang members have few opportunities to leave gangs without significant risk. In terms of societal reintegration, gang members also face stigma and lack of trust among community members. Several FGD respondents highlighted that the only options for exiting gang membership were death or fleeing to an alternate location (in Haiti or elsewhere).

In other countries, one potential exit strategy is to work for a church; however, it is unclear whether this option is effective in the current Haitian context. One religious leader noted that most gang members would be willing to leave if given another option. Another respondent highlighted that for gang leaders, economic incentives became increasingly challenging: “It depends on his level in the chain. A person who has become a leader, who has reached the level of boss, he’s not going to quit to reinsert himself into a society where you are going to pay him HTG 600 a day [...] he can make hundreds of dollars, if not USD 300,000. A person like that is not going to quit.”

Assessment Question: What role do transnational crime organizations play in gang emergence and activity?

Haiti has been a transit site for illegal drugs and weapons for decades, often with the direct involvement of politicians and the private sector. The recent growth of gangs and a matching need for weapons and ammunition, along with their increasing control of major infrastructure such as ports, have increased their involvement in these activities. However, identifying direct ties between gangs and transnational crime organizations (or their business and politician partners) is difficult. Yet, there are documented cases of Haitian gangs exchanging weapons and drugs with Jamaica, as well as multiple cases involving U.S. nationals and businesses smuggling weapons from the United States to Haiti for the benefit of gangs such as 400 Mawozo. In addition, the volume and type of weapons in the hands of gangs today is viewed as a telltale sign that they have connections with transnational crime.

HAITI AND TRANSNATIONAL CRIME: Transnational crime has been present in Haiti and tolerated, if not embraced, by consecutive governments since the late 1980s. Colombian drug traffickers, particularly Pablo Escobar, used Haiti as a storage and refueling point for U.S.-bound cocaine.²⁴ By 1998, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) estimated that up to one-fifth of all cocaine consumed in the United States transited through Haiti.²⁵ Upon President Aristide’s second return to power in 2001, his *chimères* (armed gangs whom he supported) were given free rein and political protection, which enabled them to control contraband and drug trafficking. Furthermore, President Aristide and Haitian security officials met to discuss how to best tax drug traffickers to generate funds for weapons for the HNP and the *chimères*.²⁶

Indeed, Haiti’s location at the midpoint between continents, its extensive coastline, and widespread corruption are a tempting mix for transnational crime. Transnational crime organizations (particularly drug traffickers) have made a resurgence with strong political support. On the other hand, several drug smugglers have been arrested in Haiti and tried in the United States (such as Jean Eliobert Jasme).

DRUG AND WEAPONS TRAFFICKING: Gangs have not been particularly active in the drug trade until recently, perhaps because the penalties were too harsh or because other corrupt actors controlled the

²⁴ Swenson, Kyle. 2015. “The Rise and Fall of Haitian Drug Lord Jacques Ketant.” *New Times*. (May 27). Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://www.browardpalmbeach.com/news/the-rise-and-fall-of-haitian-drug-lord-jacques-ketant-7001667>.

²⁵ Farah, Douglas. 1999. “Flow of Colombian Cocaine through Haiti Turns to Flood.” *Washington Post*. (May 4).

²⁶ Weaver, Jay and Jacqueline Charles. 2006. “Drug probe targets Aristide.” *Miami Herald*. (July 6).

market, sometimes working with corrupt police officers to protect shipments.²⁷ However, the increasing growth of gangs has created a greater need for weapons, which some gangs procured with funds from their involvement in the drug trade.

Both gangs and transnational crime organizations have been involved in the weapons trade, often relying on the United States as the source for some portion of their weapons. Gangs have taken control of many private Haitian ports, which facilitates their collaboration with transnational organizations on drug shipments and weapon imports. In October 2021, a U.S. citizen and two Haitian nationals who live in Florida were indicted in a U.S. federal district court on charges of smuggling weapons into Haiti for 400 Mawozo. There also have been reports of weapons being exported from Haiti to Jamaica in exchange for drugs.^{28,29}

KIs and FGDs demonstrated awareness of the linkages between transnational crime organizations and gangs in the drug and weapons trade. Local and international citizen security experts highlighted that gangs depended on the private sector and political elites (and their relationship to transnational crime) to facilitate weapons and drug trafficking. For example, some respondents expressed that guns must come from outside the country, which entails coordination among corrupt, elite actors. Respondents also suggested that gangs provide local protection services for transnational crime organizations.

While these connections seem obvious, the GOH and the USG seem unable to track much of the trade in drugs and arms. According to an international citizen security expert, “This is happening more and more because it’s an open country with ports run by private entities and sometimes by former senators or politically connected people. Cap Haitien and Saint Marc, and the new Port-au-Prince port are the only places where things have been seized in the last 3 years. Nowhere else really.” Ports appear to be a lynchpin in the transit of weapons and illicit goods from international sources. However, ports are not the only way to get illicit goods into Haiti – small planes with contraband frequently land on clandestine airstrips in Haiti’s rural regions. A young man in Les Cayes spoke clearly about the gangs’ dependency on others for weapons: “Because the equipment they have, the ammunition they buy, they aren’t the ones with the economic ability to get those things.”

Assessment Question: What is the relationship between gangs and communities?

The assessment team found that by and large, communities do not benefit from gang control and presence. There may be some upsides, including protection against police abuse and other gangs and occasionally, the distribution of goods that gangs obtained either through theft, patronage, or their role as community gatekeepers. On the other hand, the territorial focus of gangs exposes communities to bouts of violence during conflicts between gangs or against the police, and limits the free movement of people and goods between communities. A vast majority of those with gangs in or near their area do not view gangs as undertaking activities that benefit the community and, instead, tie them to thefts and violence.

²⁷ Haitian Times. 2019. “Drug Traffickers Exploit Haiti while Amassing \$10 Billion Under U.S. Scrutiny.” (January 7). Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://haitiantimes.com/2019/01/07/drug-traffickers-exploit-haiti-while-amassing-10-billion-under-u-s-scrutiny/>.

²⁸ InSight Crime. 2021. “U.S. Guns Flow into Haiti, Fuel Gang Violence.” (November 30). Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://insightcrime.org/news/us-guns-flow-into-haiti-fuel-gang-violence/>, and The Gleaner. 2020. “Fishing for guns – Old Harbour Bay boatmen rake in profits with drugs-for-arms trafficking to Haiti.” (February 11). Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/lead-stories/20200210/fishing-guns-old-harbour-bay-boatmen-rake-profits-drugs-arms>.

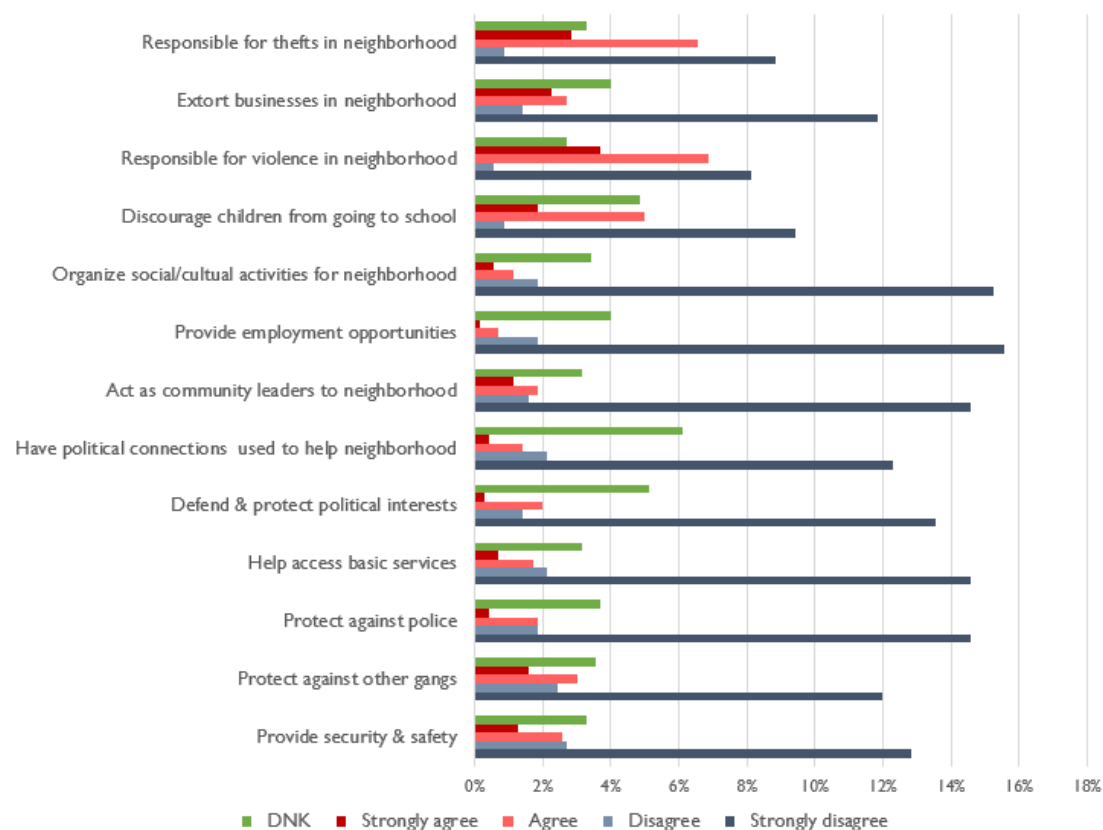
²⁹ InSight Crime. 2020. “Jamaica and Haiti Swap Drugs and Guns.” (June 23). Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://insightcrime.org/news/analysis/jamaica-haiti-drugs-guns/>

Gangs in Haiti emerge from, recruit from, weaken, and then lead communities. Community institutions, such as local governments, social services, businesses, churches, schools, and recreational facilities are threatened by the emergence of gangs. These actors may fight weaker gangs, cooperate with those that are stronger, and often stop operating when gangs become overly abusive or engage in extended conflicts. Responses from KIs, FGDs, and survey respondents indicate that communities work with gangs as a last resort or out of necessity. However, community resilience to gangs is weaker now than in the past, as gangs have become more powerful, and the absence of public services or government presence persists. In addition, ties between gang members and the broader community persist, because many gang members grew up within the community. Despite this, even in gang-controlled communities, there is a sense of community and solidarity among community members facing insecurity.

CITIZENS' PERCEPTIONS: The assessment team found that Haitians have mixed perceptions regarding the impact of gangs on their communities. While some respondents recognize the detrimental impacts of gangs on their communities, gangs also supply certain services (including a form of security) the state does not. Additionally, gangs can provide food, water, and lower prices for goods, albeit due to theft.

The CSA survey provides some insight into how community members perceive the impact of gangs. A vast majority of respondents with gangs in or near their area report that they do not view gangs as undertaking activities that benefit the community, such as organizing social and cultural activities, providing security and protection, or even protecting the political interests of the neighborhood. Respondents are relatively split on the responsibility gangs bear for some community harms, such as thefts or local violence. However, more respondents disagreed than agreed that gangs extorted businesses or discouraged children from going to school.

Figure 14: Phone survey respondents' perception of gangs' activities



The CSA survey also uncovered the following trends:

- 106 respondents said that one or more criminal gangs were active in their neighborhood.
- 22 respondents said that gang members hung around in the streets very often, 57 said fairly often, 67 said not very often, and 421 said not at all.
- 30 percent of respondents in the Ouest department reported modifying their habits regarding leaving their community due to insecurity.

Community members recognize the detrimental impacts of gangs, including struggling local institutions (schools, churches, hospitals, and businesses) due to gang control. For example, one respondent in Delmas noted that high quality nurses had either left the community or were no longer willing to come in to provide health care: “I had to abandon the idea of a functioning hospital.” Other respondents commented on the detrimental impact of gangs on families – fathers (as providers) end up spending extended periods of time outside the community or families are otherwise displaced. Many people who evacuated from gang-controlled neighborhoods have lost touch with family members who stayed. Evacuees have created problems for the neighborhoods they move to. Many of them stay for long periods of time with relatives, while others seek places to rent, which can raise housing costs. A donor official explained that the demand for housing exceeded the supply, and landlords could be selective and choose those who can pay in their preferred currency: “20,000 people that are displaced [are] looking for housing. Technically, rentals are to be paid in HTG, but landlords advertise in USD, and will accept someone who is willing to pay in USD over HTG.”

Gang control of specific areas has led to blockages of other areas, which hurts those communities and can exacerbate economic pain. Gangs also create problems for communities when they fight other gangs. During the fighting, gangs frequently prohibit residents from leaving their neighborhoods. Most people stay in their homes and are unable to get food for their families. The randomness of gang violence and subsequent fear runs through daily life, as one donor official noted: “Violence occurs randomly as you go through your day. You can’t put your finger on it. It could happen at any moment. Kidnapping or killing from a botched kidnapping attempt could occur anywhere. There is no good place. There used to be red zones that you would not go to, but now you could be in your car anywhere and be a target.”

IMPACT OF GANGS ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS: While local governments face challenges operating in gang-controlled areas, CSOs and religious leaders can operate to some extent (particularly if such areas do not face gang conflicts). While basic services – such as schools and formal social, police, and justice institutions – are no longer provided by the government in gang-controlled areas, CSOs and religious institutions have supplied some services. Such institutions must maintain positive relationships with gangs in order to function (at times, seeking approval for community improvement efforts); however, some gangs intimidate service providers and extort them. Some programs have proven resourceful and agile enough to adjust to gang-related insecurity. For example, a community leader in Delmas suggested some programs could continue if they switched to a virtual format, such as college preparation.

Gangs also control many parts of Port-au-Prince (and elsewhere), where traditional entry or transit points for humanitarian aid and development programs are located.³⁰ Therefore, aid groups are forced to actively monitor such points and seek potentially risky alternatives. For example, the World Food Programme has had to redirect some aid from the capital to other seaports.³¹ Mercy Corps noted that the need for non-food items, such as tents and hygiene kits, normally eases a few months after a disaster, but this has not been the case in southern Haiti after the 2021 earthquake.

Security costs related to both staff and shipping also raise costs for aid organizations to the point where budgets are stretched and project effectiveness is undermined. Sometimes security is insufficient or not possible, and gangs have gone after aid workers, equipment, and beneficiaries. Aid workers have also not been spared from kidnappings. *Midwives for Haiti* reported that they had to stop working at a government clinic near the Dominican Republic border because gangs were terrorizing staff and patients. Hospitals in multiple locations have reported equipment theft, including of costly and critical generators. In some cases, gangs use the supplies for their own purpose or demand a ransom to return them. Furthermore, a community leader in Martissant noted that a European Union-funded workforce development program had to shut down due to intense gang intimidation.

Aid and development organizations have managed to navigate some gang areas through careful networking and dialogue with leaders, and by having widespread acceptance among the local communities where they are active. However, as local organizations noted, changes in gang leadership or approaches can suddenly disrupt operations and require weeks or months of dialogue to address.³²

Assessment Question: What are the relationships between gangs and the political system, the police and the security forces, the judicial system, and the private sector?

The assessment team concluded that there are no clear ties between gangs and the recently recreated Haitian military. Many gangs in Port-au-Prince outmatch private security and the use of these services paints a target on guarded shipments or locations. There is anecdotal evidence that gang members and private security have linkages, such as gang members hired as armed private security staff. The private sector is by and large seriously harmed by gangs both directly (e.g., extortion) and indirectly (e.g., declining business climate, supply chain disruptions, loss of customers). However, a subset of private-sector actors derives benefits from gangs, using them as a tool to achieve business or political goals.

GANGS AND THE MILITARY: The assessment team did not detect much evidence of a relationship between gangs and the Haitian military, which was reconstituted only recently. The assessment team did not find significant proof to support the rumors of ex-Armed Forces of Haiti (FADH) members contributing to insecurity or participating in gangs. One international security expert noted that, “[...] ex-FADH are nearly gone now, these people are too old today and those who claim to be ex-FADH groups are most likely lying or have one to two older members who are ex-FADH. [...] In 2012–13, the UN looked at ex-FADH, and found that only three or so ex-FADH groups existed out of a few hundred groups that claimed to be ex-FADH; the rest was nonsense.” Many ex-FADH were integrated in the HNP and the *Brigades de Surveillance des Aires Protégées* (BSAP), which is an organization similar to

³⁰ The New Humanitarian. 2022. “In Haiti, gang violence strains aid operations and demands new approaches.” (February 7). Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2022/2/7/Haiti-gang-violence-strains-aid-operations-demands-new-approaches>.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

environmental rangers and that has not had much publicity compared to the HNP and other GOH organizations. However, the same security expert noted, “Today, this group has to be watched carefully, as under Joseph Jouthe [former Minister of Environment and Prime Minister for a brief period], the BSAP recruited a lot of youth and created a large paramilitary force out of the BSAP that has [not been in the news lately], although there are indications that the BSAP provided weapons to G9.” Their activities are allegedly particularly significant in Nord-Est department.

GANGS AND PRIVATE SECURITY: The practice of wealthy Haitians hiring private security services to protect their homes or businesses began as of the late 1970s, with increased street crime and theft. Haitians who could afford to hire private security services were often elite businessmen who owned multiple interests, acquired licenses to import weapons, and fielded armed personnel. In principle, these two actors (gangs and private security services) are in opposition to each other. However, there is an illicit power structure of private security in Haiti, where the armed guards most formal businesses and well-off residences hire are often gang members themselves.³³

It appears that the value of private security has also diminished, because they can signal a potential target for a gang, as noted by a member of the Port-au-Prince business community. Private security is also typically outmatched by a determined gang. Two respondents noted that private security guards often lived in the very same Port-au-Prince neighborhoods gangs were active in, which created opportunities to transfer information, such as the presence of specific high-value goods in a warehouse guarded by private security. The assessment team also found that gangs had co-opted many private security forces had been co-opted by gangs, which typically had more resources and influence on the community. Some private security companies deploy private militias, which are often made up of former private security employees. Private militias have been known to be involved in trafficking, extortion, union-busting, and general security.

GANGS AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR: Gangs harm the business community in direct and indirect ways. Businesses are directly affected by the need to pay for protection when gangs have sufficient control of the neighborhood a business operates in. This practice is reportedly widespread and even affects businesses without a fixed location that use public places, such as markets or streets, to conduct business. Outdoor markets have become subject to gangs’ protection rackets.³⁴ Some CSA interviewees noted that they needed to pay for protection because the HNP was deficient, because it is their responsibility to protect Haitians and their businesses. Several respondents, including HNP sources, also noted that protection payments were necessary for businesses, but they had the unfortunate effect of reinforcing the gangs by providing them with funding that is then used to purchase weapons, ammunition, and conduct various illegal activities, fueling a self-reinforcing cycle.

Businesses are indirectly affected by the significant rise in the risks and costs of doing business, and loss of customers due to fear, insecurity, and loss of revenue. Moving around Port-au-Prince is now very difficult, and the kidnapping risk while conducting business is significant. As a representative of a Chamber of Commerce noted, several of the Chamber’s staff had faced kidnapping attempts in areas such as Delmas and Sacré Coeur, and some had been kidnapped and required negotiations with the perpetrators to free them. This same representative also noted that foreign investors interested in his

³³ Beer, D.C. 2016. “Chapter 3 Haiti: The Gangs of Cité Soleil.” PRISM, the Journal of Complex Operations. National Defense University. (May 24). Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://cco.ndu.edu/News/Article/780129/chapter-3-haiti-the-gangs-of-cit-soleil/>.

³⁴ Miami Herald. 2019. “Dozens brutally killed, raped in Haiti massacre, police say. ‘Even young children were not spared.’” (May 17). Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://account.miamiherald.com/paywall/stop?resume=230380739>.

business had been unable to come to Haiti due to insecurity. He noted that there were individuals who were used to doing business in areas that were sometimes unsafe, but that Haiti was beyond the risk level they considered acceptable.

In the absence of state authority, gangs have expanded their own businesses and extorted a wider range of businesses. Additionally, expanded geographic control enables them to extort more businesses, including markets, ports, and factories. Gang control of more geographic areas constrains the private sector's ability to operate through trade and travel for work. A business leader told the assessment team that remote populations could no longer purchase some items because gangs blocked shipments of goods, while transportation remained a key issue: "The[re is] difficulty in reaching and developing clients outside of Port-au-Prince due to limited infrastructure and disruptions on the roads. This limits the delivery of goods and services and raises costs significantly. There is a security fee to be paid essentially along all the roads taken by goods."

Some FGD participants noted that gangs typically told the neighborhood when they planned to take certain actions, such as blocking roads, and asked the population to stay at home, and so all stores and markets were closed and making trips to work or livelihood activities was very difficult. Other gang actions are more reactive, unplanned, or kept secret from the population, and ultimately, have the same negative effects on the local population. Difficulties getting to work affect the revenue and job security of workers and entrepreneurs, because some businesses, especially those located outside the neighborhood, understandably do not tolerate frequent late arrivals or missing several days of work, even for legitimate safety reasons. These events appear to have a snowball effect: Businesses in other parts of cities are still affected by gangs because of their work, as well as risks of kidnapping and attacks by gangs active in the area where the business is located.

The benefits certain private-sector actors derive from gangs are more subtle, but seem widely known. These potential benefits include the use of gangs as a tool to achieve business goals, such as intimidating or burning down competitors in areas where the business already operates or in areas the business targets for expansion. They also include achieving political or policy goals, such as intimidating efforts to unionize or protesting for a higher minimum wage or threatening to use violence if the government does not act in a particular manner.

CSA interviewees pointed to large, formal, and established private-sector actors as more inclined to use gangs because they have resources and standing. Haiti's economy is largely organized around the control of resources by a select few, and gangs help perpetuate and maintain that control. Among the private sector actors with the means to work with gangs, there is a collective action problem: Certain actors may work with gangs, which pushes others to also work with the same or other gangs so as not to be at a competitive disadvantage. Conceivably, this trend could even work based on rumors and savvy gang leaders could exploit it to obtain greater support by playing private-sector actors against each other. An additional benefit from working with or through gangs is that they can help private-sector actors pursue illegal activities, such as drug or weapon smuggling or human trafficking, as a core business or a secondary source of revenue. Gangs are ideal in these roles and can be less conspicuous than other approaches, such as hiring corrupt HNP officers or bringing in staff from outside Haiti.

Finally, among the gang and *baz* leaders the assessment team spoke to, many said that they owned legitimate businesses, including car rental shops and bars. They also noted that others among their ranks and in other gangs did the same. These businesses were reportedly started thanks to money made through gang activities and may continue to benefit financially from illegal revenue sources. The owners are entrepreneurs in both the gang economy and the private sector, and their activities intertwine.

THEME I RECOMMENDATIONS (UNDERSTANDING INSECURITY AND VIOLENCE)

- **BUILD CSO MECHANISMS TO REPORT CRIME AND AID VICTIMS IN GANG-CONTROLLED AREAS:** Citizens lack confidence to report crimes to the GOH and HNP, while provision of aid to citizens in gang-controlled areas remains a challenge. To address these issues, USG actors could build CSOs' capacities to facilitate crime reporting and assistance to victims, as well as invest in mechanisms such as relevant offices within gang-controlled neighborhoods or hotlines, apps, and websites. Such tools could be focused on specific types of crimes, such as rape, domestic violence, robbery, and assault. CSOs could then provide support to citizens who report crimes and better connect them with relevant actors (i.e., social services, mediators, human rights advocates, legal aid offices, lawyers, police, Justices of the Peace, or prosecutors). In addition to improving reporting mechanisms and assistance to victims, this recommendation could help reinforce official crime data at the local level.
- **INITIATE NEIGHBORHOOD-BASED GANG REDUCTION AND TRANSFORMATION:** GOH institutions, including the HNP, lack the capacity and funding to combat gangs or transform gang members to constructive citizens. A serious gang reduction and societal reinsertion strategy requires sustained financing, reliable police, and quality social services. Under these circumstances, USG actors could build the capacity of GOH institutions (including the HNP) to work with communities to address gang presence and violence in specific neighborhoods. This initiative should be conditioned on increased GOH funding levels. USAID would need to coordinate with the U.S. State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) and the DEA on this approach.
 - This approach could include (1) prioritizing state presence, such as a vetted HNP unit; (2) using visible prevention and interdiction techniques; (3) using dynamic, geo-referenced crime models to track progress; and (4) developing a community communications strategy. USG agencies such as INL could build the capacity of the HNP to use strong law-enforcement tactics, impose penalties and jail time for crimes committed by gang members, execute raids, and impose curfews in targeted neighborhoods.
 - USAID could provide capacity-building support to GOH agencies and CSOs for the delivery of crucial community and social support services, aimed to: (1) address youth risk factors and providing alternatives to gang membership; (2) provide psychosocial prevention programs; (3) create workforce and economic opportunities; and (4) build community-police partnerships. Once a neighborhood is safe enough for outsiders to enter and residents can safely leave the home to carry out routine activities, GOH agencies could offer such crucial social support to communities under the supervision of social workers. Such an approach could be replicated neighborhood by neighborhood, after making sure that these efforts are successful and sustainable.

THEME 2: CRIME AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION, RESPONSE, AND SANCTIONING

JUSTICE SYSTEM

As detailed in this section, the assessment team found that Haiti's formal justice system functions poorly and fails to serve citizens. While donors have invested in the justice system for decades, only incremental improvements in specific institutions or legal frameworks have been obtained, but no sustainable advances in access to justice.

Government of Haiti (GOH) resistance to increasing the judiciary's funding and independence has been a major contributing factor to its poor performance. While revised criminal procedure codes were approved by Presidential decree in 2020, political chaos has hindered their initial June 2022 implementation targets. In line with these systemic issues, the judiciary has substantial shortcomings in its delivery of justice: poor infrastructure, a strained relationship with the HNP, prolonged pretrial detention, widespread corruption and elite impunity, and weak protection of victims.

The assessment team found that the judiciary rarely helps citizens gain justice in response to violence. Both perpetrators and victims of violence often avoid the formal justice system, resolving their problems through informal justice, including mediation, ADR, and vigilantism. In gang-controlled areas, gang leaders frequently mediate complaints by victims and other civil disputes. Thus, Haitian victims of violence are unable to count on the formal system.

Assessment Question: How is the justice system structured and operating in Haiti?

The assessment team found that Haiti's justice system functions and functions poorly, despite years of donor-funded capacity-building. This reflects an active resistance by the GOH to reform the severely underfunded system and increase its independence. In addition, it is evident that the relationship between law enforcement and the judiciary is strained, prolonged pretrial detention remains the norm, corruption is widespread, and protection of victims and witnesses is almost nonexistent.

The 1987 Constitution, drafted after the fall of the Duvalier family dictatorship, establishes principles for a system of justice. Haiti's judicial branch comprises four tiers: the Supreme Court, Courts of Appeal, Courts of First Instance, and Justices of the Peace. The Supreme Court is the highest court in the nation and provides a last recourse in matters decided at the appellate level. The Courts of Appeal are composed of five regional appellate courts: Cap-Haitien, Gonaïves, Hinche, Les Cayes, and Port-au-Prince. The Courts of First Instance are composed of courts of original jurisdiction in civil, commercial, or criminal matters. The decisions of these courts may be appealed to the Courts of Appeal and the Supreme Court. A Public Prosecutor's Office and investigative judges are designated for the Courts of First Instance. Lastly, Justices of the Peace preside over peace courts and have jurisdiction over small claims in civil, commercial, and criminal matters, especially family cases. In addition to these four tiers, there are four special courts: the Labor Courts, the Juvenile Court, the Land Court, and the High Court of Accounts, which hears appeals and claims for damages by individuals against the government. The High Court of Accounts also has the administrative function of auditing the government's accounts.

JUDICIAL OVERSIGHT: Two agencies oversee the justice system. The Office of Citizen Protection (OPC), Haiti's ombudsman, provides external oversight. The OPC handles citizens' complaints regarding officials' abuse of power and abuse in detention. The other oversight body is the Superior Council of the Judiciary (CSPJ), which is the administrative body of the judiciary established to secure judicial independence and ethics.

CRIMINAL CODE AND PROCEDURE: While revised criminal procedure codes were submitted to the president in 2015 and approved by Presidential decree in 2020, political chaos has prevented them from achieving their initial June 2022 implementation targets. The implementation of revised codes is particularly necessary to address critical issues such as pre-trial detention. When someone is caught in the act of committing a crime, the case is sent to the Public Prosecutor's Office, which conducts the preliminary investigation. The case is then forwarded to the investigative judge, which is the legal authority who decides on charges. The Public Prosecutor's Office is often assisted by the judicial police in serious criminal matters, such as kidnapping and drug cases. Once a case is referred to the police, they must bring the suspect before a judicial authority, such as a Justice of the Peace, the Public Prosecutor's Office, or an investigative judge. Persons accused of a crime are sent before an examining magistrate, who is responsible for investigating the case and deciding to charge or release the accused within 90 days or in certain cases, 120 days.

MINISTRY OF JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SECURITY (MOJPS) AND PROSECUTORS: The MOJPS oversees the police and prosecutors, investigating complaints and taking actions against corruption. The MOJPS supports the CSPJ in this objective.

LAWYERS AND THE BAR: Most of Haiti's practicing lawyers work on civil cases and frequently use civil procedure to pressure judges to delay trials. Lawyers are free to abuse their clients, such as shielding them from information about their cases and overcharging them, without repercussions from the Bar Association; a justice official described the legal profession as not having sufficient oversight in Haiti. Regardless, because courts are closing due to insecurity, many lawyers have also been unable to conduct business and have been subject to kidnappings and killings.

PRISONS AND THE JUVENILE JUSTICE CENTER: Haiti has 17 prison facilities and 5 more under construction. For minor boys, it has one juvenile justice center, CERMICOL. Minor girls are sent to the Cabaret Civil Prison for Women.

FUNCTIONING OF THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

Through its extensive review of literature and analysis of CSA responses, the assessment team found that the Haitian justice system has struggled to uphold constitutional principles that guarantee political and civil rights, as well as checks and balances to hold the government accountable for abuses of power. The legacy of decades of authoritarian rule enforced by violence and corruption has remained deeply entrenched in institutions of justice. The relationship between law enforcement and the judiciary is strained. Local police perceive judges as slow to act, which is exacerbated by requirements in Haitian law for police to witness a criminal in the act in order to arrest or detain a suspect. The new criminal procedure code, which is not yet operational, lays out additional circumstances and requirements that allow police to arrest or detain suspects.

Donors have supported capacity-building of justice institutions, which has yielded incremental gains in the efficiency and accountability of the system. These efforts tended to treat the symptoms rather than the cause of justice sector failure, namely the GOH's long-term lack of commitment to reform. The entire justice system, from police to courts to prisons, is severely underfunded. Systemic problems, such as extraordinary levels of pretrial detention, have remained largely unchanged, and the GOH continues to block any real attempts to increase the judicial system's independence.

All relevant CSA respondents (including Bar Association leadership) recognized the poor performance of the justice system. Furthermore, there were strong doubts among many interviewees that the Haitian justice system could appropriately investigate and prosecute those responsible for the murder of

President Moïse in 2021. One religious leader stated: “Injustice has become justice;” another said, “There is no justice system, just money changing hands.”

PRETRIAL DETENTION AND PRISONS: Prolonged pretrial detention has plagued Haiti for decades. Reports from a local human rights monitoring organization, National Network for the Defense of Human Rights, indicate that the proportion of prisoners in prolonged pretrial detention is increasing. According to a 2021 UN study, as of May 2021, Haiti’s 17 prisons held (1) 10,801 men, 81 percent of whom were in pretrial detention; (2) 436 women, 92 percent of whom were in preventive detention; (3) 240 boys, 94 percent of whom were in preventive detention; and (4) 23 girls, 96 percent of whom were in preventive detention. In 2018, a special Prison Administration office was established to conduct inspections, but has not yet carried out visits. Detainees are unable to report abuses to the HNP inspector general (IG), who oversees the Prison Administration.³⁵

CSPJ AND JUDICIAL OVERSIGHT: The CSPJ began operations in 2012. Despite intensive donor investment, it has not yet fulfilled its mandate to govern the judiciary and secure judicial independence and ethics. However, two promising initiatives to provide oversight of judges are the creation of a judicial inspection service and the establishment of judicial disciplinary courts. One donor representative exclaimed, “Does the CSPJ exist? The President of the CSPJ died from COVID and other judges have been arrested. The CSPJ has never been effective. The CSPJ is not in a position to rein in gang violence.” A judge further detailed the work ahead of the CSPJ, noting, “The CSPJ is there to oversee the institutions of the judiciary, such as the judicial inspection service that evaluates the work of judges and the decisions made by the disciplinary court. We must work to strengthen these tools because they will increase the efficiency of the CSPJ.” A CSPJ member shared his improved assessment of the CSPJ, saying, “The judge is no longer in debt to the politicians, even if there is still more work to do. Judges have a better framework under which to work. The administrative independence of judges has improved. There is more supervision thanks to the judicial inspection and judicial certification. The law requires that judges be evaluated every 2 years. However, this process has not yet been put in place. An evaluation will encourage judges to give better results.”

CRIMINAL PROCEDURE CODES: The new criminal code – approved in 2020, but not yet implemented – has several provisions that could make justice in Haiti more effective by (1) incorporating freestanding criminal laws into a unified code, such as the law on gender-based violence; (2) incorporating international commitments into domestic legislation; (3) redefining some crimes as misdemeanors, allowing for a faster judicial process; (4) adding new crimes, such as cybercrime; and (5) making the criminal code more gender-inclusive for some crimes such as sexual assault. The code also adds criminal offenses related to gang membership. In terms of next steps, one judge remarked: “Transitional steps require the code to be implemented for 2 years, including training of judges, lawyers, bailiffs, police, and other justice sector personnel so that they learn how to work with and interpret the code. We have been in a political hurricane since the code was communicated. [...] The current government must focus on this matter.”

ALTERNATIVES TO PRISON: The new criminal procedure codes create options to pursue alternative measures to pretrial detention and establish detention of children as a measure of last resort. A judge explained that the current codes allowed for the release of prisoners on bail, but that option was not a

³⁵ UN Integrated Office in Haiti. 2021. “*N ap mouri*,” *Rapport sur les conditions de détention en Haïti*.” Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/reports/joint-report-ohchr-and-binuh-n-ap-mouri-rapport-sur-les-conditions-de-detention>.

common practice because finding released prisoners and forcing them to attend hearings was difficult or impossible. In addition, judges have difficulty setting bail at levels that prisoners can afford.

CORRUPTION: Actors and users of the justice system recognize corruption as a significant problem, as evidenced by accounts from multiple justice officials. For example, one judge noted that 95 percent of prosecutors were hired because of recommendations from politicians, which was to the detriment of the system: “Justice is taken hostage by politicians who have relations with gangs. When a gang member is arrested, you see a police officer intervene and a prosecutor demand that this person be released. Sometimes, he is released to a prosecutor. When someone is a notorious member of a gang, he is held in prison for some time. After that, a certain judge, with the help of politicians and high-level police officers, has the means to free this person. [...] And that is why certain members of gangs feel untouchable.” Corruption among judges, as well as their hindrance of law enforcement, were also highlighted. A human rights official suggested that resourcing was not the source of the problem; it was the quality and ethics of judges, instead.

CRIMES FOR WHICH GANG MEMBERS ARE CHARGED: The most frequent charges levied against gang members include association with wrongdoers, armed theft, kidnapping, ransom demands, and rape. About 40 percent of the cases of gang members who are arrested go to trial, according to one judge respondent. He explained that the case file frequently took an enormous amount of time to be transferred from the judge to the prosecutor. Judges are unable to dismiss cases involving gang members, and it is difficult for prosecutors to dismiss cases involving gangs, criminal cases, and cases where there is strong evidence.

PROTECTION OF VICTIMS AND WITNESSES: Haiti’s forensic evidence processing capacity is limited. Consequently, judges rely significantly on plaintiffs and witnesses in deciding cases. However, this approach is clearly limited in a context where impunity is widespread. In some cases, judges, police, and their family members have been assassinated due to their work on specific cases. Some witnesses leave the country, change their address, or refuse to collaborate. These situations result from the absence of a witness protection policy. The new criminal procedure code, yet to be implemented, provides for limited witness protection by allowing withholding of names and addresses.

COURT STAFF: All court users must engage with the clerk’s offices, which are a dysfunctional access point for judicial corruption. Bailiffs collect unauthorized fees and pass a portion of them on to judges. Many court staff are untrained, not provided with necessary equipment, and receive low remuneration, which can lead to occasional strikes among their ranks.³⁶

Assessment Question: How are actors hired and trained?

The assessment team identified evident shortcomings in the hiring and training of quality justice sector actors, such as judges, prosecutors, court staff, and lawyers. Actors in the justice system are not always hired through and in accordance with the established procedures. Political support is a major factor in hiring, and sometimes takes precedence over hiring requirements. On-the-job training is occasional for prosecutors and rare for judges, while it represents the principal way of building skills for court staff (although that has changed since 2018). Lawyers are not trained using a standard curriculum and the Bar Association lacks a nationwide examination.

³⁶ France24. 2022. “Lawyers fed up with paralyzed judicial system in Haiti.” (April 9). Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20220409-lawyers-fed-up-with-paralyzed-judicial-system-in-haiti>.

JUDGES: Judges are required to graduate from a 4-year law school and attend the School of Magistrates (EMA). Another route to becoming a judge is by obtaining 8 years of experience as a lawyer and attending a short training period at the EMA. However, according to one judge, some individuals are able to become judges without a law degree due to political support. A justice official told the assessment team that the law required continual training of judges, but the EMA had not been able to implement such a program. Despite donor investments, the EMA remains a weak institution that lacks a board of directors.

PROSECUTORS: A judge told the assessment team that no more than 5 percent of prosecutors had attended the EMA and the remainder were hired due to political support. A MOJPS official stated that prosecutors benefited from occasional short training on specific issues, such as trafficking in persons.

COURT STAFF: Until recently, court staff have been trained on the job. In 2018, the EMA held the first training of law school graduates who wished to become court clerks.

LAWYERS: Law schools lack a standard curriculum. Their curricula are generally inadequate, inconsistent, or antiquated; professors are underqualified; and law schools are not accredited. Additionally, the Bar Association certifies lawyers, but lacks a nationwide examination.

Assessment Question: How is the justice sector funded?

The Haitian justice sector has been poorly funded, as reflected by the various strikes and work stoppages occurring periodically in recent years. This lack of funding is linked to elites' political control that underfunds the GOH more broadly and prevents reforms that would, among other things, adjust funding. As a result, the assessment team found that justice actors lacked motivation, absenteeism was high, and some resorted to extorting the people they ought to serve. Furthermore, the justice system infrastructure (e.g., courthouses and equipment) is in disrepair and outdated.

For decades, the elite political control of Haiti has resulted in a small government budget that starves essential services, such as the justice system. Opposition to true reform of the justice sector has also been demonstrated by the GOH's refusal to increase government funding for justice institutions.

Consequently, justice actors, including police, prosecutors, court staff, judges, and prison staff, cannot do their jobs effectively and often extort the people they are supposed to serve. A MOJPS official said that the small budget had significant impacts on all aspects of the justice system: "During the last few years, the Ministry of Justice has had to deal with a very low level of financing compared to its needs. The result was work stoppages and strikes in the justice system since 2017. This situation has occasionally paralyzed the justice system." Further, judges receive low salaries, which affects incentives and ability to effectively do their jobs. A donor official described the inefficiencies at all levels of the justice system: "[Courts] are underfunded. They don't have proper facilities. And despite heroic efforts at working with the judicial sector, there's little success. There is consistent undermining of the justice system by others in the government and private sector... Government doesn't pay the police consistently. [The GOH is] undervaluing, dismissing, not holding them accountable."

Assessment Question: What are key barriers to accessing justice in Haiti?

The assessment team identified many barriers Haitians face in accessing justice. Lack of infrastructure leads some rural inhabitants to make long trips to the courts. Corruption of justice actors undermines the credibility of the system in the eyes of the population, reducing their incentive to use it, while extortion is often required to move forward, further limiting the ability of many to use the system.

The CSA survey revealed that few respondents reported using the courts or the formal justice system. Of 701 respondents, 16 said that they had contact with a court in the last 12 months and 22 had contact with a prosecutor. KIs addressed two key barriers to accessing justice, among others:

- **CORRUPTION OF THE FORMAL JUSTICE SYSTEM AND ABSENCE OF RULE OF LAW:** As detailed, the assessment team found that many Haitians lacked access to justice due to the formal system's corruption, lack of adherence to the rule of law, lack of respect for rights, and absence of judicial independence. The impunity of perpetrators and prolonged pretrial detention are clear barriers to accessing justice.
- **INADEQUATE FUNDING AND INFRASTRUCTURE FOR THE JUSTICE SYSTEM:** As stated, inadequate funding has severely limited the capacity of the justice sector. Additionally, lack of funding has limited the construction and maintenance of major justice sites, such as police stations and courthouse buildings. In some areas, citizens lack access to both of these critical institutions; judges can also lack money or the means to access transportation to justice facilities.

Assessment Question: Do barriers to accessing justice vary widely across geographies, ethnic groups, social classes, and economic contexts?

The assessment team found that less affluent, less politically connected, and less educated Haitians had particularly limited access to justice due to the frequent need to pay or have political allies to gain access to justice services and move cases forward, and the fact that the justice system largely operated in French. Women rarely use the courts due to social and procedural issues and discrimination. Certain rural areas also have minimal judicial presence.

Access to justice is the best for those who are rich, politically connected, and male. A MOJPS official put it simply: "Justice is not distributed equitably among different social categories." Interviewees agreed that the poor and vulnerable had the least opportunity to obtain justice. Women rarely use the courts due to social and procedural issues, discrimination, cost, and lack of education. A judge emphasized that stigma was an issue in accessing justice, in particular for sexual assault cases.

In addition, the legal system largely operates in French. Judges and court staff typically do their best to inform Kreyol-speaking persons of the proceedings, but those who are unable to speak French are at a clear disadvantage, especially those without legal aid or a lawyer.

Assessment Question: What government and civil society mechanisms for enhancing access to justice exist (e.g., legal aid and ADR)?

While legal aid resources such as the Bar Association (primarily funded by donors and NGOs) and the OPC exist, it appears that they are not widely known to Haitians and legal aid remains in relatively short supply despite a 2018 law promoting this service. Mediation is not a formal part of the judicial system. Justices of the Peace can engage in reconciliation but lack training, while mediators can facilitate dialogue but cannot propose a solution. Given the state of the justice system, the vast majority of Haitians use informal justice facilitated by, for example, community leaders or gangs, while lawyer-facilitated ADR is increasingly used by those with the resources to do so, including businesses.

LEGAL AID: Although legal aid is a right, it is not available to many criminal defendants. Much of Haiti's legal aid is provided by the Bar Association and has been funded by NGOs and donor agencies. A few

legal aid centers have existed for over a decade, but a Legal Aid Law, passed in 2018, has encouraged the creation of additional legal aid centers. A Vance Center study from mid-2021 suggested the implementation of the 2018 law was insufficient and noted that “important progress on the implementation of the legal aid system and the new criminal codes is delayed.”³⁷ Before the 2018 law, the Bar Association made lawyer trainees available for any person who was arrested, but challenges existed regarding defendants’ awareness of this option and the availability of such assistance in rural areas.

The OPC and human rights organizations also take legal action for specific clients. The CSA survey found that ordinary citizens lacked awareness and understanding of the relevance of these organizations to the justice system. None of 701 respondents reported that they had contact with a legal aid clinic in the last 12 months and only one person contacted the OPC.

ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION (ADR): Mediation operates as a community-based method of ADR and is not a formal part of the judicial system. Justices of the Peace have the legal right to engage in reconciliation, although they lack training in relevant techniques. Haitian law also allows a mediator to facilitate dialogue between parties in dispute, but the mediator does not propose a solution. In these situations, the parties must settle their differences with the help of a mediator.

There is no law that specifically addresses ADR, which would benefit Justices of the Peace and legal aid centers. Given the state of the Haitian justice system, NGOs are eager to expand mediation as part of conflict-resolution activities in rural areas. Many businesses are turning to lawyer-based ADR, because they cannot rely on the courts for quick, equitable decisions. A business leader told the assessment team, “It’s been 3 years that there are no real courts. So commercial and justice questions are all sorted outside of courts, among lawyers and in the streets. There will not be a Court of Cassation next week, because there are only three judges right now and quorum is five. This tells you a lot about how the system looks.”

INFORMAL JUSTICE: One consequence of a failing formal justice system is that many Haitians seek informal approaches to justice. A 2017 survey of USAID’s Justice Sector Strengthening Program (JSSP) found that 90 percent of citizens resolved disputes outside of the formal justice system, in informal ways.³⁸ This may involve mediation with informal community leaders and religious figures for less serious disputes.

Vigilante and non-state justice is common in many communities, especially rural areas. In these cases, administrators and prominent community figures with no legal mandate take on the role of judges and assert authority to order the arrest and detainment of accused persons and issue legal decisions. In tight-knit communities with ineffective judicial institutions, the logic behind these actions is sound. Local mediators or arbitrators are more accountable to the population than prosecutors or judges, who can be bribed or influenced inappropriately. Respondents also indicated that in gang-controlled areas, many citizens took their conflicts to gangs, who then dispensed informal justice.

³⁷ Cyrus R. Vance Center for International Justice. 2021. “Vance Center and ILAC Assess the Rule of Law in Haiti.” Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://www.vancecenter.org/vance-center-and-ilac-assess-the-rule-of-law-in-haiti/>.

³⁸ Social Impact. 2020. “Mid-Term Performance Evaluation of the Haiti Justice Sector Strengthening Program.” Accessed November 14, 2022. https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00VVR9P.pdf.

Assessment Question: How effective is the justice system in dealing with violence and citizen security challenges?

The assessment team found that the Haitian justice system was highly ineffective in deterring, responding to, and punishing crime, which led to widespread impunity and recidivism. Victims and witnesses often refuse to cooperate with the police, prosecutors, and courts due to a lack of confidence in the system's effectiveness and an awareness of the risks they face in coming forward. Anecdotally, Haitians feel that justice might work for small crimes, but not the serious ones. The fact that many high-profile cases remain unresolved or have been dropped largely confirms this.

As detailed previously, the justice system is highly ineffective in deterring, responding to, and punishing crime. The skyrocketing rate of kidnappings and the rising rate of intentional homicides are a result of the ineffectiveness of the justice system, as are the many criminal cases that remain unresolved. Victims and witnesses often refuse to cooperate with the police, prosecutors, and courts due to a lack of confidence in the justice system's effectiveness and an awareness of the risks they face in coming forward. The unobstructed proliferation and geographic expansion of gangs is evidence that the justice system is unable to punish violence.

A unified, strong perception of the justice system's ineffectiveness came across in almost all of the assessment team's relevant KIs, FGDs, and survey responses. Several respondents highlighted corruption and recidivism as core issues in combating crime and violence. A local citizen security specialist stated: "The principal cause of violence and insecurity is impunity and justice sector dysfunction. Impunity results from courts that do not function well, as well as lack of confidence of Haitians in the justice system." A donor official elaborated that justice actors had perverse incentives and were, thus, unable to address violence: "The incentive of justice sector actors is they want to stay alive. They don't want to rock the boat. They are intimidated. Investigative documents are stolen, investigators are threatened."

In addition, a community respondent in Les Cayes indicated that gang members were often released from jail and returned to prior activities. One respondent in Croix-des-Bouquets FGD expressed that justice was more effective for small crimes than large ones: "If you have a minor problem with someone, you might get justice. A little basic problem. But big problems that have to do with physical violence, with clashes, people who subject you to abuse or actual harm, there's an 80 percent chance you won't get justice."

Assessment Question: How do citizens perceive the justice system?

It appears that the average Haitian has no expectation that the justice system would protect them and instead, perceives the system as a threat. Their trust in courts and expectations for a fair trial have been declining over the last 10 years and are both very low today. The assessment team found some differences across departments with regard to trust in courts, but the Ouest department (where gang activities are the most widespread) also had the lowest level of trust in courts. The commonly cited reasons for low trust in the justice system are systemic corruption, double standards based on resources and connections, and the fact that justice system actors are at times also threatened.

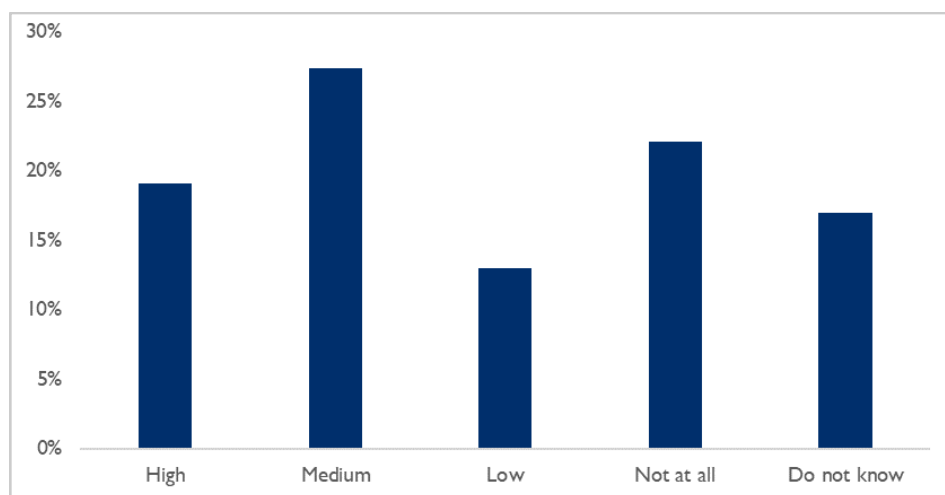
Haitians infrequently view the justice system as a means of protecting them; instead, they perceive the justice system as a threat to their safety. The 2020 LAPOP survey of young adults in Haiti found very low levels of trust in courts and expectations for fair trials. Nearly 7 out of 10 young Haitians surveyed

indicated that they had little to no expectation from the state to protect civil rights. Trust in the Haitian judiciary deteriorated the most of all of LAPOP's indicators: In 2010, around 18 percent expressed that they had little to no trust in the court system; this rose to 45 percent in 2016, and 70 percent in 2020.³⁹

The National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago's (NORC's) 2017 evaluation of USAID's PROJUSTICE program found that the institutions with the highest average levels of distrust were the parliament, the courts, and the justice system.⁴⁰ The 2020 JSSP evaluation asked 60 interviewees, "Do citizens have faith in the justice system?" to which 50 responded "no." Of those 50, the most frequent explanations were that citizens perceived a double standard for the wealthy or well-connected or that there was systemic corruption in the judicial system.⁴¹

Additionally, CSA survey respondents were asked how they trusted different justice institutions to deal effectively with problems. *Figure 15* shows the levels of trust in the courts: Less than 20 percent of survey respondents reported a high level of trust in courts and less than 15 percent reported a high trust of magistrates. The CSA survey also found that trust in the courts varies across Haiti's different departments. The Ouest department, where criminal activity is the highest, feels the lowest degree of trust in the courts, with 41.5 percent of survey respondents feeling either low or no trust at all in the courts. Trust is also low in the Artibonite, Centre, Nippes, and Nord departments. Respondents in the Grand Anse department had the highest reported level of trust in the courts.

Figure 15: CSA survey responses to "To what extent do you trust courts to deal effectively with the problems you face today?"



Based on CSA interviews, there appears to be a common perception of a connection between gangs and judges, although there have been few documented instances of direct relationships and judges are regularly threatened during cases that involve gang members. Given the extensive control the executive has over that branch of the GOH, there can be little doubt that interferences do occur. For example, off-duty HNP officers and a Justice of the Peace savagely beat the hands and feet of a landowner in the

³⁹ LAPOP, 2020.

⁴⁰ NORC. 2017. "Impact Evaluation of USAID Haiti PROJUSTICE Program Pretrial Detention Component." Accessed November 14, 2022. https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pa00mz6b.pdf.

⁴¹ Social Impact, 2020.

mostly residential Vivy Mitchell suburb of Port-au-Prince.⁴² In another recent example, in 2020, Yvickel Dabrézil, HNP provided an investigative judge looking into a high-profile assassination of one of Haiti's most well-known journalists weapons for his own protection.⁴³

POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

The HNP is a young institution, created in 1995 with donor support. The assessment team found that similar to the broader judicial system, it was overwhelmed by the country's security environment, lacks resources, and suffers from political interventions and corruption that breed mistrust. Police officers are ill-equipped and afraid to confront gangs, particularly as they expand their control. Internal and external accountability measures have proven ineffective, while police may collaborate with gangs for financial reasons or personal safety.

In addition, the assessment team found that many Haitians do not trust (or rely on) the police. Survey and interview responses suggest that the HNP is generally unable to respond to community needs. In the 701-person CSA survey, out of 46 persons who were attacked, 23 did not report it to the police, citing most frequently a lack of trust in the police or the expectation that the police could not or would not act. In addition, a recent lack of HNP response to several high-profile massacres that took place in neighborhoods politically opposed to the government indicated that leadership was either inept or politically captured.

In such an environment, it is difficult for police officers to enforce the law, guarantee citizen security, or ensure human rights, even with the best of intentions. As a result, Haitians take their security into their own hands by fleeing from gangs or cooperating with them, and growing areas of Haiti become lawless.

Assessment Question: How is law enforcement structured?

The HNP, created in 1995 and housed within the MOJPS, oversees police, corrections, fire, emergency response, airport security, port security, and coast guard functions. The police force of about 15,000 operates under 10 directorates, one for each department. This number, when considering the size of Haiti's population, is significantly below the Caribbean average.

The Central Directorate of the Administrative Police oversees the crime prevention and response functions of the police force. Its official responsibilities include ensuring public safety; protecting people, property, and state institutions; safeguarding the peace, tranquility, and public order; ensuring law enforcement and rehabilitation; overseeing police stations and units; tracking prisoners; and approving requests to carry firearms.

The Central Directorate of the Judicial Police undertakes investigations for the HNP. Its mission is to identify perpetrators of crimes, gather evidence against them, and bring them to judges expeditiously. Its mandate also includes combating organized and transnational crime. In addition, the Police Academy supports the HNP by training new police inspectors and commissioners; it trained about 15,000 officers between its founding in 1995 and 2021. However, a police respondent explained that the HNP's differentiation between the administrative and the judicial police did not match conditions on the

⁴² Miami Herald. 2020. "It's not the first time they tried to take his Haiti land. This time he was left for dead." (May 13). Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://haitiantimes.com/2020/05/13/its-not-the-first-time-they-tried-to-take-his-haiti-land-this-time-he-was-left-for-dead/>.

⁴³ Miami Herald. 2021. "Judge arrested in alleged plot to overthrow President Jovenel Moïse: It was a set-up." (February 18). Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/nation-world/world/americas/haiti/article249315755.html>.

ground: “We are here to prevent when we are in the street. We are supposed to make sure that everything is going well. But there is a situation of tension, where the police are supposed to repress, so there you fall directly in with the judicial police. That is why we can say that we are both the administrative police and the judicial police at the same time.”

The current police force of approximately 12,800 operates under 10 directorates, one for each of the country’s geographic departments. Police are stationed at the department level, as well as at the 41 arrondissements and 133 communal offices. The assessment team received some feedback on the HNP structure from respondents. A local citizen security expert highlighted the small ratio of police per 100,000 inhabitants, which is the standard measure of level of policing. He indicated that Haiti’s ratio was 108:100,000, while the average in the Caribbean was 320. The worldwide median is about 300.

Interviews with former HNP officials further demonstrate the institution’s poor functioning. One former official told the assessment team that the HNP structure continued to be the problematic, politicized structure of pre-1995 police under the Army. He believed there has been no real improvement in the police, despite intensive donor support. He also criticized the Superior Council of the National Police as a politicized body that lacked a deep understanding of security.

Assessment Question: How does law enforcement operate?

Through KIs and FGDs, the assessment team found that the HNP was underfunded, lacked real political support, and was under-equipped compared to some of the gangs in Port-au-Prince. HNP officers are, therefore, unable to enter gang strongholds and many cannot prevent crime or assist those who are victimized. Its leadership and oversight body are highly politicized, subject to pressures and interference from some of the same people who work with and fund gangs.

Underfunding of the HNP has created enormous obstacles in professionalizing and resourcing the body, which allowed elites and corrupt actors to capture it. As noted by several KIs, while political and business leaders recognize the importance of the police, they do not appropriate necessary funding. As a result of lack of resources, many individual police officers are unable to prevent crime, assist those who are victimized, or enter areas controlled by gangs. Those working in their own neighborhoods are afraid of retribution if they arrest criminals, especially those with political connections that enable them to avoid prison or leave it quickly. Other police respondents highlighted fear of combating gang members, who may have relatively stronger weapons.

The culture of the HNP is corrupt, as communicated by police actors, security specialists, and citizens in KIs and FGDs. Promotions are not based on merit, but on relationships with politicians and businesspeople who often support organized crime and gangs. Gangs have infiltrated the HNP, and they gain protection or commitments not to interfere and in some cases, access to weapons and other police resources. Consequently, police officers on the street lack incentive to do their jobs correctly. Judicial police also operate in a corrupt environment, which frequently prevents or discourages them from undertaking investigations that might result in a conviction. Further, the poor quality of forensics creates incentives to use forced confessions and abusive tactics. An enormous backlog of criminal cases and prolonged pretrial detention mean that cases must be followed for years to obtain convictions.

One police officer spoke of the conflict of interest between politicians who authorized police raids on gangs, but at the same time, provided the gangs with resources and political support: “[The Superior Council of the Haitian National Police is made up of] political actors. It is these people who are telling you what kind of police operation we are going to conduct, when, with how many people, and with

what kind of weapons the police are going to conduct that operation. And they even provide the modus operandi. It would seem that these same people, who are ordering the police to do what they are going to do, are the same ones who are telling the gang that they'll fund them."

Another officer agreed that politicians intervened in police decisions, while a local citizen security expert further described how politicians prevented police raids on gang neighborhoods from going forward. A police unit leader agreed with the citizen security expert that it was impossible to raid gang-held neighborhoods that harbored kidnapping victims, noting "[T]oday, the gang strongholds became very difficult or impossible to penetrate without risking the life of the hostages and other civilians. Today, [the police] only has the possibility to gather information on gang members and arrest them outside their territories, which was a very successful tactic used by the Director General of the HNP Normil Rameau. This way, he could confine the kidnapping incidents related to Village de Dieu with a minimum of civilian hardship."

Assessment Question: How are law enforcement actors hired and trained?

The assessment team found limited information on the hiring and training of law enforcement. While there is a formal system for recruitment of HNP officers, the vetting of officers has not always been in place. In addition, it appears that donor support has enabled major improvements in the capacity of the Police Academy to deliver training to HNP recruits. The training provided seems to include community policing methods, but there is a need for more specialized training.

HIRING: To apply for the HNP, one must be a Haitian national between 18 and 30 years of age with no felony record and have attended school through the equivalent of 9th Grade. While there is a formal system for recruitment, it seems that an informal system, based on whom the applicant knows and what political support they have, is also in place. A judge told the assessment team that absence of vetting had allowed gang members to join the police. They also noted that politicians may ask police leadership to integrate specific gang members into the police, and that police officers who had exited joined (or rejoined) gangs, allowing for the persistence of a network between police and gangs. Furthermore, the corrupt recruitment process had a negative impact on citizens' overall perceptions of the police, as one Les Cayes FGD respondent noted.

TRAINING: The police academy trains new recruits to be inspectors and commissioners. It builds on training donors provided to more than 8,500 officers from 1985 to 2000. International donors, particularly the Canadians, created the curricula and built the capacity of the Police Academy to deliver trainings using its own staff. In particular, several police officer FGD respondents highlighted community policing approaches taught at the Academy. Donors continue to collaborate with the Academy to provide specific courses. However, a lack of resources limits the maintenance of HNP buildings and the delivery of continuing education to police. Further, the expansion of gangs has created additional needs in terms of specialized training (e.g., guerrilla tactics).

Assessment Question: How is law enforcement funded?

Significant donor assistance has enabled the HNP to build its capacity relative to that of other justice sector institutions, but limited GOH funding persists. While the share of total GOH budget allocated to the HNP is high compared to other government functions, this represents a substantial slice of a relatively small pie, especially in the current citizen security context. Low salaries and inconsistent payment have bred discontent and strikes, increased the chance that HNP officers live in gang-controlled neighborhoods, and encouraged corruption, which has become an endemic part of the HNP's culture. Limited funding has also prevented the HNP from acquiring ammunition and weapons. All of these factors appear to have contributed to the emergence of Fantom 509, a group of disgruntled HNP officers who mentioned payment of salary arrears as part of their demands.

INADEQUATE FUNDING: Significant donor assistance has enabled the HNP to build its capacity relative to that of other justice sector institutions; however, limited GOH funding persists. The HNP receives about 7 percent of the government budget, which is a high percentage compared to other government functions, but the total government budget is relatively small.⁴⁴ Low salaries and inconsistent payment have encouraged corruption, which has become an endemic part of the HNP's culture. As noted by a former police officer, living in poor neighborhoods due to these factors facilitated corruption: "Police staff who are living in slums create groups for self-protection. These groups develop practices similar to gangs. Police staff have no choice but to join gangs."

Limited funding has also prevented the HNP from acquiring weapons, including weapons that match those gangs use.⁴⁵ The result is a dysfunctional criminal justice system and HNP's inability to resist the growth of armed gangs and organized crime and respond to citizens, as evidenced by interviews with donors, police officers, GOH officials, and citizen security experts. Additionally, a business leader emphasized that there was a weak level of uniformity of equipment in Haiti, specifying, "In the U.S., all police officers have the same car, so it is easy to address repairs. Here, there are 27 different types of cars. The same goes for guns. Materials are not fixed or replaced. Sometimes a police officer may have problems with the gangs and gives them his gun."

Another former police officer said that HNP salaries were not enough to even afford housing. They said: "The largest structural issue is [low] salaries. With inflation, devaluation of the HTG versus the USD and a basic salary of USD 300, the earnings are insufficient for a police officer to live on. The biggest item in spending is housing, forcing police staff to look for cheap housing in areas controlled by gangs."

DISCONTENT AMONG HNP: Inadequate funding is a major factor in the serious incidents of discontent within the HNP, such as through inconsistent and low payment, which threaten institutional cohesion. One example of this is the emergence of the Fantom 509 group, which is a violent, heavily armed group of disgruntled rogue and former HNP officers that emerged when police officers began to strike for more pay.⁴⁶ Fantom 509 frequently terrorizes the public while wearing police uniforms or in vehicles with official license plates. Fantom 509 members often do not face opposition from other HNP officers,

⁴⁴ Ministère de l'Economie et des Finances. 2017. "Documents annexes au budget 2017–2018." Available *here*.

⁴⁵ Baranyi, Stephen. 2019. "Second Generation Security Sector Reform or Unending Violence in Haiti?" *Stability International Journal of Security and Development* 8(1). Accessed November 14, 2022.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331575969_Second-Generation_SSR_or_Unending_Violence_in_Haiti.

⁴⁶ Le Nouvelliste. 2020. "Une manifestation émaillée de violence d'un groupe de policiers dénommé 'Fantom 509.'" (April 27). Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://lenouvelliste.com/article/215434/une-manifestation-emaillee-de-violence-dun-groupe-de-policiers-denomme-fantom-509>.

even when they attack police stations. Fantom 509's existence, tactics, and success have eroded public confidence in the police and emboldened criminal gangs. In early 2020, the Minister of Justice and Public Security declared Fantom 509 a terrorist group.⁴⁷ The GOH has increasingly pursued members of Fantom 509 as their actions have become progressively frequent and brazen.⁴⁸

Assessment Question: What are the priorities of law enforcement actors?

The assessment team found limited information on this subject. However, at an organizational level, the HNP appears to have focused the most on recruitment and training of personnel, which did boost the number of HNP officers. Goals related to decentralization and improved territorial coverage were not met, and neither was the promotion of community policing. There also seems to be a lack of will and intent to combat gangs, and the perception that the HNP was focused on specific and narrow areas and that HNP officers are unable to conduct prevention activities that are viewed as important.

A 2016 evaluation of the implementation of the 2012–2016 HNP development plan found that the most substantial progress had occurred in the areas of physical infrastructure, recruitment, and training of personnel. Other advances occurred in working toward gender equality and strengthening accountability mechanisms. However, the evaluation found poor performance on meeting decentralization goals (responding to needs outside of Port-au-Prince) and promoting community policing (which was only adopted in a few instances, despite strong support from donors).⁴⁹

The HNP has sought donor support to increase the number of trained police officers for many years. Recently, the HNP's size has shrunk due to deaths, dismissals, and resignations. In 2017, the HNP estimated it had a ratio of 1 police officer for every 733 inhabitants nationally. However, the HNP are not evenly distributed throughout the country; field research has indicated persistently low police-to-population ratios in departments in the South, at about 1 officer for every 2,666 inhabitants, and in the North, at about 1 officer for every 1,785 inhabitants.

Due to considerable efforts to recruit female officers, 10.6 percent of the 12,800-member uniformed personnel were women in 2021, which was just short of the 11 percent targeted in the development plan, but far from the 30-percent quota for women in public services established by a 2012 amendment.

The CSA asked respondents for their perspectives on HNP priorities, particularly with respect to gang violence. A local citizen security expert told the assessment team that the HNP must prioritize combating the gangs and tracking their money, which required intelligence and monitoring. In addition, a donor official questioned whether the HNP did anything substantial to address violence nation-wide, emphasizing that their support was highly localized: "The police are only trying to do something in Croix-des-Bouquet. It is the only place they are trying to do anything." An international citizen security expert believed that the GOH had wrong priorities for the HNP, because it did not tackle the barriers to police effectiveness, such as corruption, inadequate equipment, and insufficient community resources. One police officer FGD respondent lamented that the HNP could not live up to its priority of crime prevention: "The role of all police is a type of prevention. Because the police are more preventive than

⁴⁷ Le Quotidien News. 2020. "Fantôme 509 considéré comme un groupe terroriste." (May 11). Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://lequotidiennews.org/fantome-509-considere-comme-un-groupe-terroriste/>.

⁴⁸ Le Nouvelliste. 2021. "Fantom 509: la PNH annonce révocation et avis de recherche." (March 23). Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://lenouvelliste.com/article/227603/fantom-509-la-pnh-annonce-revocation-et-avis-de-recherche>.

⁴⁹ HNP. 2016. "5e rapport de la mise en œuvre du plan de développement de la Police Nationale d'Haïti 2012–2016." Available [here](#).

repressive. So, the role of the police in general is to always try to avoid the perpetration of an offense. But unfortunately, we know that the offense is always easy to repeat.”

Assessment Question: What strategies and tactics does law enforcement employ?

The assessment team obtained limited data on this question, but it is clear that limited staff and resources, combined with increasing gang control of neighborhoods, limits the tactics available to police officers. Their ability to conduct prevention activities, investigate and gather intelligence about crimes, and conduct coordinated, large-scale operations in gang-controlled neighborhoods is severely restricted. The last large-scale operation against gangs ended in costly failure, both in terms of lives, equipment, and HNP credibility. Anecdotally, it also appears that police presence has been reduced in neighborhoods like Martissant, likely due to a combination of the above factors.

Limited staff and resources, with increasing gang control of neighborhoods and roads, limit the tactics available to police officers. In the past, they could patrol many neighborhoods on foot or cruise them using their vehicles. However, these tactics are no longer possible in many areas, so it is difficult to collect the intelligence necessary to prevent and solve crimes. In many areas of Haiti, there is limited or no police presence. Some police have been corrupted by the gangs and provide them with support and intelligence. Also, the strength of gangs has increased to the point that police can rarely undertake the massive raids they were able to several years ago.

Recent attempted raids have been marked by tragic and spectacular failures. For example, on March 12, 2021, a HNP operation involving specialized units and equipment, including two armored vehicles, in the Village-de-Dieu slum of Port-au-Prince led to the death of five officers, injuries to many more, and the loss of the armored vehicles. The exact rationale behind the HNP operation in Village-de-Dieu is not clear but acting HNP General Director Leon Charles indicated that this slum was “one of the places where they hold most of the people who are kidnapped.”⁵⁰ While investigations are ongoing, there have been no new developments for over a year and several elements suggest potential political intervention.

LACK OF RESPONSE: A common thread across high-profile, violent incidents in the last few years is the lack of HNP’s response toward gang actions. The HNP did not respond to repeated pleas for intervention by Bel-Air residents over a 3-day period in November 2019; police officers stood by or participated in the dramatic G9-linked gang attacks in the neighborhoods of Chancerelles, Cite Soleil, Fort-Dimanche, La Saline, Pont-Rouge, and Tokyo in May 2020; and they did not respond to repeated requests for backup by HNP SWAT officers in the March 2021 raid on Village-de-Dieu for more than 2 hours. This could be attributed to HNP’s incompetence, fear, or potentially, political interference.⁵¹

KII and FGD participants provided important insights into HNP strategies and tactics. A Martissant community leader said that there used to be police presence, but the police recently merged with local gangs, which hurt their reputation: “The neighborhood used to have police presence and a police station. The HNP was doing a good job, particularly through preventive activities with youths. In recent months, there has been an increase in the integration between HNP staff and gangs. Known police officers are now active in gangs. They are sharing information. There has been a loss of credibility and

⁵⁰ Miami Herald. 2021. “Death of police in failed Port-au-Prince slum operation spark FreeHaiti hashtag, outrage.” (March 15). Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/nation-world/world/americas/haiti/article249920548.html>.

⁵¹ Jones, Katie. 2021. “Haiti Massacres Reveal Active Gang Support from Police, Officials.” *InsightCrime*. (May 3). Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://insightcrime.org/news/gang-led-massacres-relied-support-police-state-officials-haiti/>.

confidence in HNP.” Other respondents highlighted the need for HNP to increase intelligence efforts and counter weapons trafficking.

Assessment Question: How responsive is law enforcement to local needs?

Evidence from CSA survey responses and interviews suggests that the HNP is generally unable to respond to community needs. HNP’s presence in neighborhoods appears severely limited and primarily takes the form of passing through in a vehicle. Further, HNP officers rarely participate in prevention activities or engage in conversations with community members. Haitians are reluctant to report violence for reasons including a lack of trust in the HNP and their ability and willingness to act.

CITIZEN REPORTING: Most Haitians who are victims of violence avoid making reports to the police. In the CSA survey, only half of the victims of physical attacks and 20 percent of the victims of sexual assault reported the crime to the authorities. They fear that the police would not or could not help or would only make the situation worse. Their perspective is grounded in truth, particularly in areas controlled by gangs, because police do not enter and cannot respond to crime (as previously detailed). For example, an FGD participant in Delmas shared her frustration at the absence of police in her neighborhood: “The problem with insecurity is that, imagine someone living in an area, imagine a bandit coming into your house, they shoot, your family is shot ... You don’t have someone who would respond to your needs ... When a bandit breaks in, no one is calling the police. The police do not come where I live.”

In other areas, police focus on preventing crime and responding to crime reports, although they are often overwhelmed, as reported by a CSO leader. This leads to inconsistent police response, as noted by a young male FGD participant in Croix-des-Bouquets: “Sometimes the rate of insecurity rises. When there are bandits in the street, kidnapping people, sometimes we see a special police unit come in and intervene. It intervenes, and you can find a certain calm return. On the other hand, sometimes when you most need that police force, that’s when it doesn’t come.”

ABSENCE OF POLICE: FGD participants in Delmas highlighted the absence of police in their neighborhood and mistreatment by police in other neighborhoods: “The cops often say that since you live in the area, you are part of the bandits. You are a bandit. They always say you are the wife of a bandit. When you’re out of the area, you’re vulnerable. You can’t talk to any cops.”

In the CSA survey, less than a third of respondents said that police officers patrolled the area at least “fairly often” and less than 7 percent stated that police officers helped with crime prevention activities. It was also rare that police officers attended neighborhood meetings or engaged in friendly conversations in respondents’ neighborhoods. In this context, it is difficult to envision how the HNP could respond to community needs.

A local citizen security expert explained that businesspeople turned to gangs for security, rather than to the police, because the gangs were more effective at providing protection: “There are cases where the gang is so strong that the businessperson has no choice but to seek protection from it. Quite often, the entrepreneur is stuck; either he closes his store, or he subsidizes the gang.” In addition, a business leader noted that some businesspeople reported crimes to the police or Justices of the Peace, but they had no expectation that justice would be brought.

Assessment Question: What is the role of politics in shaping HNP priorities?

Politics shapes HNP priorities in multiple ways. Limited state revenue causes the HNP to be underfunded, and officers are often poorly treated and ill-equipped, which affects priorities. Political meddling directly influences which cases are investigated and possibly even responded to, as evidenced by the multiple events where the HNP did not respond to ongoing, sometimes days-long bouts of violence despite pleas for help from the community. Even when there is no direct political meddling, HNP officers have low expectations regarding the ability and willingness of the HNP and justice system to properly deal with criminals they might arrest, which discourages them from even trying. This is compounded by corruption that sows mistrust among officers and the HNP hierarchy.

Political interests weigh in on police attempts to investigate crimes and remove gangs from areas they control. Additionally, efforts to fight corruption within the police have been delayed due to political intervention. The relationships between politicians, police, and gangs reduce the incentive for the HNP to prevent and respond to gang violence and corruption. All four groups benefit from the status quo.

There are many examples of these relationships, including the questions surrounding the Village-de-Dieu raid previously noted and the arrest of two senior GOH officials associated with the La Saline massacre in 2017. After Haiti's Central Directorate of Judicial Police reported the complicity of these two senior GOH officials to the Moïse administration in mid-2019, they were removed from office after further protests by high-level officials, but neither was arrested or imprisoned.

CSA interviews reinforced the view that political interference affects the HNP. A police commander noted: "In our work, we are facing challenges dealing with politicians. When you intervene in a case according to the law, a political figure or authority will come and pressure you to change the decision or deviate from your original decision. We are clearly lacking a genuine form of autonomy in our work." A GOH official also confirmed that "Sometimes, police would like to intervene somewhere, but politics prevent them from doing so. There are police personnel with links with armed gangs. Some police note that some members of their teams alert gangs of planned operations, so they will fail." This creates frustration among the HNP officers who want to do their job, as noted by a police officer: "Many aspects of our work are currently made almost impossible by our political leaders. Even when we have information and we want to have an operation, we need the green light from the authorities."

Assessment Question: How does law enforcement act to prevent and respond to violence and gang activity?

In neighborhoods not controlled by gangs, the HNP tries to conduct traditional police crime prevention activities and respond to reports of violence. However, its capabilities and coverage to do so are limited. In neighborhoods controlled by gangs, today, the HNP cannot intervene or investigate. Lack of reporting, witness collaboration, and corruption all harm any serious effort to intervene.

In areas not controlled by gangs, police officers do try to conduct traditional police crime prevention work to the extent possible, including staying aware of the environment, getting to know community members, and cultivating information sources. However, CSA survey data reflect that this only occurs occasionally, and police presence is overall scarce. In addition, police on the street, in the station, and in hospitals receive reports from victims. In many cases, police are able to mediate between the parties. Prosecutors direct investigations of the most serious crimes. However, if the crime takes place in a gang-controlled area, it is difficult or impossible for police to investigate.

Prior to 2019, gangs were less brazen and likely responsible for a smaller volume of crimes. They controlled only a few neighborhoods, although they were active in other neighborhoods. With help from the UN, the HNP was able to mount several operations to control gang violence. Today, gangs control more territory and the HNP mounts fewer anti-gang operations. With respect to kidnappings, the HNP has difficulty freeing hostages, especially when they are held in gang-controlled areas.

CITIZENS' PERCEPTIONS: CSA interviewees had mixed responses regarding the potential for the HNP to effectively combat gangs. A donor official said that she believed that the HNP could not undertake operations to eliminate gangs without causing enormous collateral damage, and a CSO director said that even if operations were successful, they would not address the root problem behind gang formation. However, a GOH official had more confidence in the potential success of police anti-gang operations if the HNP received more resources, saying “With the right training, equipment and numbers, HNP can uproot the gang in Village de Dieu and end their activities.”

An international citizen security expert laid out the challenges in ending gang violence while protecting the population: “I assume if there was a strategy to ‘eliminate the gangs,’ at one level, you would need to have significant coercion. But the question is what to do with the people who are not necessarily with the gangs, but are compelled to be there because [that is their home] and they have to show some allegiance.” To address these challenges, a CSO director recommended that Haiti use a specific task force and learn from other places, such as New York (e.g., Bronx) that had successfully uprooted gangs.

Assessment Question: What are accountability mechanisms for law enforcement actors? Are these accountability mechanisms effective at preventing excessive force and corruption?

The HNP is subject to internal accountability through its internal hierarchy and the HNP IG, and external accountability through the Secretary of State for Public Security, the Minister of Justice and Public Security, and the Superior Council of the National Police. Other external accountability mechanisms also exist, such as the OPC, the court system itself, human rights CSOs, and the media. The assessment team found that the existing internal accountability mechanisms of the HNP were hindered by corruption and political interference. External accountability mechanisms resting in the hands of the GOH are heavily politicized, possibly undermined by corruption, and therefore, unable to effectively address abuses. The OPC, human rights organizations, and the media have greater power to hold police accountable than the courts, because they are able to publicize police abuses.

The HNP is subject to internal and external accountability. The HNP IG has the authority to investigate and discipline police who demonstrate misbehavior. Previously, the IG led the effort to vet police for human rights abuses that occurred prior to service with HNP, but this effort has stopped. Externally, the Secretary of State for Public Security, the Minister of Justice and Public Security, and the Superior Council of the National Police oversee the HNP. Additionally, prosecutors and judges strive to hold police accountable for specific cases, the OPC addresses human rights abuses, human rights organizations and media organizations publicize police abuse, and human rights and legal groups take legal action in specific cases of police abuse.

The majority of respondents from KIs and FGDs perceived the hierarchy of the HNP as thoroughly corrupted and that most promotions were based on political connection rather than merit. Further, supervisors appeared to encourage and participate in corruption and tolerated excessive force.

The IG regularly experiences challenges in exerting authority in all regions of the country and is limited financially in its ability to carry out investigations in distant regions. The IG, while noted for its professionalism, has been reportedly limited in its ability to impose disciplinary punishments on certain HNP units, particularly those dealing with protests or gangs. The IG has been able to make significant advances to increase the transparency of its own work and discipline police accused of abuses, which is evidence of some level of improved oversight. Still, the IG remains constrained by an inability to enforce oversight on special-order units or ensure prosecutions.

A donor further described the limitations of the IG to hold police accountable, because of their geographic and technological constraints: “Since the police was created in June 1995, there is only one office where people can make complaints against HNP officers, the General Inspectorate. Last year, a regional office was opened in Cap Haitian, but it’s still far from enough. Plus, the General Inspectorate is in the zone of influence of G9, which compounds the problem. They’re looking to move now. HNP standard operating procedures to receive complaints are also flawed. There is no [information technology] system, so making the complaint in-person is the only way.”

The MOJPS’s efforts to provide oversight to the HNP are counterbalanced by its efforts to achieve political objectives and intervene in specific cases on behalf of politically powerful persons. The Superior Council of the National Police adds another layer of politicization to the HNP, and some of its members seem to not understand civilian policing and its role in a democratic political system, according to members of a police FGD. In addition, courts provide accountability by challenging the procedures police use in investigating cases, collecting evidence, and gaining confessions. However, the courts are bound by the severe backlog in cases, the limited extent of their current operations, and the ease of losing parties to appeal judgments, so they are not an effective tool for holding police accountable. The OPC, human rights organizations, and the media have greater power to hold police accountable than the courts, because they are able to publicize police abuses. For example, after a gang took control of Port-au-Prince’s Palace of Justice and stole case files in June 2022, the OPC told the press, “The police have been unable to recover control of the court, which the gang is patrolling and surveilling with drones.”⁵²

Assessment Question: How do citizens perceive law enforcement?

Evidence from CSA survey responses and interviews suggests that while some Haitians have enough trust in the police to rely on them to help with minor issues, most Haitians have little or no trust in the police, especially to address major forms of violence in their communities. In fact, many Haitians believe that the HNP are part of the violence problem due to their support for gangs and corruption.

While some Haitians have enough trust in the police to rely on them to help with minor issues, the CSA survey (as detailed below) shows that many Haitians have little or no trust in the police, especially to address major forms of violence in their communities. They perceive that much of the HNP’s action is for show and the HNP can do little to uproot gangs and respond to gang violence.

For example, a business leader said that the business community had little confidence that the police would help them, even for everyday matters: “At the office someone lost a laptop, and someone suggested calling the police. Everyone just laughed. They started to collect money to replace it instead. It is so sad that these institutions are not really working. The population has no expectation that the police

⁵² Human Rights Watch. 2022. “Haiti: Wave of Violence Deepens Crisis.” (July 22). Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/07/22/haiti-wave-violence-deepens-crisis>.

will help. They expect police officers to be a problem. If I see a police officer, I wonder if he is going to ask me for money or block me. You must rely on yourself. You can't rely on these institutions."

Many Haitians, including businesspeople, CSOs, and religious leaders, believe that the HNP are part of the violence problem due to their support for gangs. The assessment team found broad agreement among interviewees and FGD participants that the police were not to be trusted. A mayor told the assessment team that the population often could not differentiate between police and gangs, because they were so intertwined. One private-sector leader explained that police were involved in kidnappings and provided cover for the perpetrators, highlighting one recent instance where a kidnapping of two businesspeople took place during a normal HNP blockade.

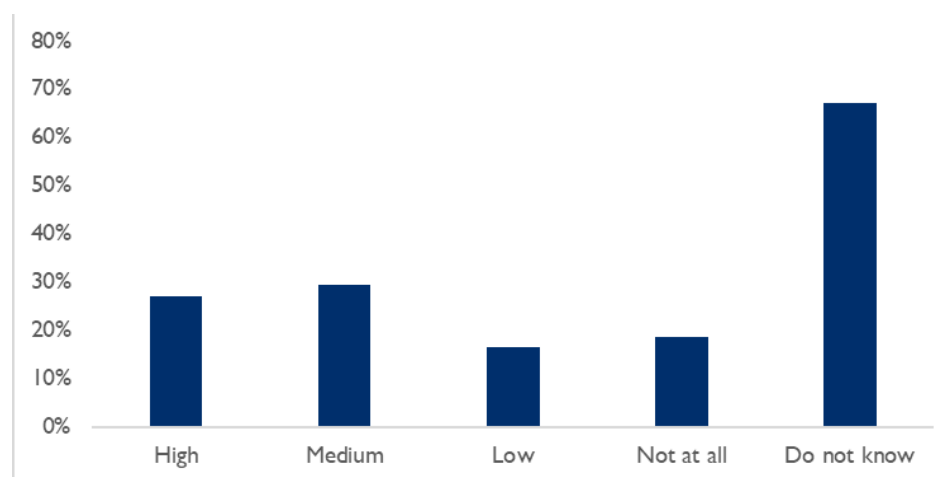
Several other accounts (as previously detailed) tied the HNP to gang-related events, but the extent of their involvement was unclear. The HNP was also present with armored vehicles, tear gas, and officers at the May 2020 violence in the neighborhoods of Chancerelles, Cite Soleil, Fort-Dimanche, La Saline, Pont-Rouge, and Tokyo. Many witnesses reported automatic fire on all sides, beheadings, and piles of burning bodies. These accounts clearly tie the HNP to the events alongside the gangs, but it is unclear which party was responsible for which parts of the attack; at the very least, HNP officers stood by while gangs attacked.

Interviews suggest that Haitians are concerned about HNP's excessive force against individuals who might be innocent. A Les Cayes FGD also complained about just this scenario: "And even when they do [intervene], sometimes it is somebody who is innocent or who doesn't know a thing about what happened that they put on the ground or arrest. They are doing it for show. But the place where they should be going, the place where they know the criminal is, they never get there. Innocent persons are paying for the guilty." This type of scenario breeds fear and mistrust of the HNP.

The CSA survey asked respondents about their level of trust in the police – 19 percent said they had no trust in the police, 16 percent said their level of trust was low, 29 percent said medium, and 27 percent said high (see *Figure 16*). The remainder said they did not know. In Ouest department, 40 percent of respondents reported having low or no trust in the HNP, which is 5 percentage points higher than the national average. Low trust in the HNP was also observed in Nippes (59 percent), Artibonite (36 percent), Nord (33 percent), and Sud Est (30 percent).⁵³

⁵³ However, it should be noted that there are fewer observations for some of these departments. The Nippes statistics is based on 29 surveys, compared to Ouest, which has 311 observations. As a result, these department-level estimates should be treated with some caution.

Figure 16: CSA survey responses to “To what extent do you trust the HNP to deal effectively with the problems you face today?”

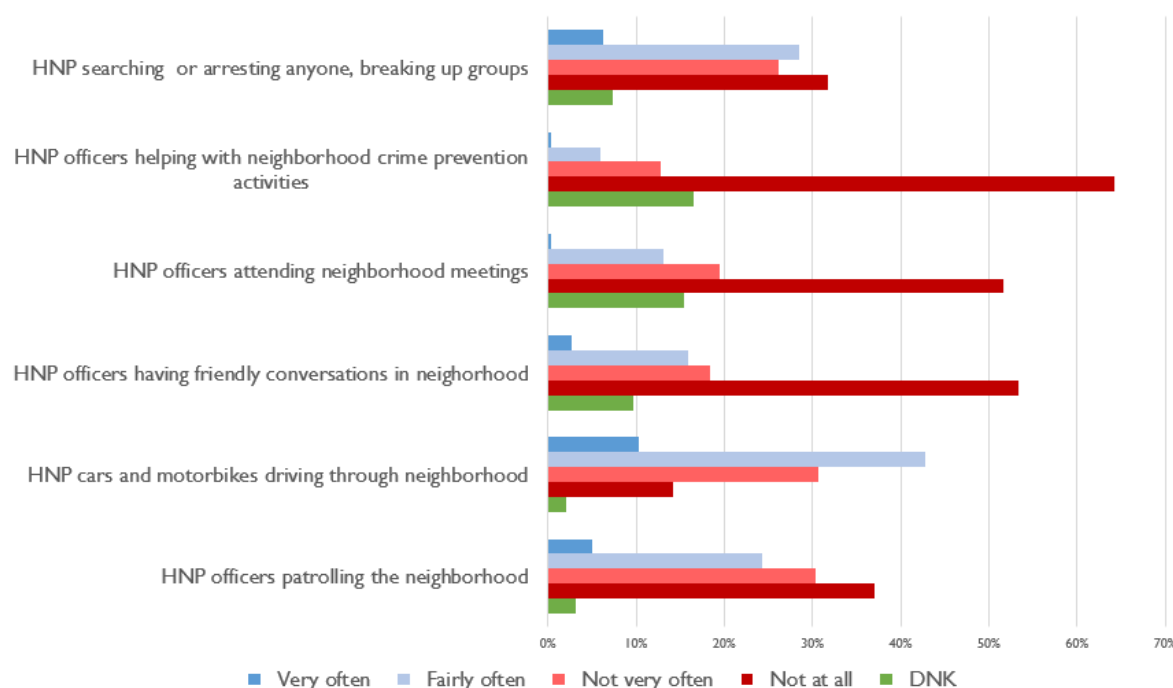


The survey asked those who had been victims of crimes to explain why they did not report the event to the police – 39 percent of the 23 respondents stated they had been victims of an attack, typically using a gun or a knife, and did not report it said they did not report it because (1) the police would not do anything about it, (2) the police could not do anything about it, or (3) they did not trust the police. This figure was 50 percent for the 44 self-reported victims of a break-in, 30 percent for the 37 self-reported victims of extortion, and 44 percent for the 79 self-reported victims of theft.

The CSA survey also provides data on citizens’ perceptions based on interactions with police and visits to police stations. As shown in *Figure 17*, slightly more than one-half of survey respondents reported that HNP cars or motorbikes drove through their neighborhood fairly often or often. However, a much smaller share, 29 percent, reported seeing HNP officers patrolling their neighborhoods fairly often or often. Community engagement activities, such as having friendly conversations with the people of the neighborhood or attending neighborhood meetings (e.g., social occasions, celebrations, public consultations), were reported even less frequently: only 18 percent and 14 percent reported this occurred very or fairly often in their area.

The most striking statistic may be that just 6.4 percent of respondents reported that HNP officers helped with neighborhood crime prevention activities (e.g., awareness raising, recreational activities) very or fairly often. On the other hand, 35 percent stated that HNP officers often or fairly often used heavy-handed tactics, including search and frisk, breaking up groups, or arresting anyone in an area in their neighborhood.

Figure 17: Frequency of HNP activities in the neighborhood of phone survey participants



In terms of experiences with visits to police stations, 52 respondents said they had had contact with a police officer in a police station (42 of whom said they went to file a complaint); satisfaction with the treatment they received in the police station was mixed, but positive on balance. Among 40 respondents whose contact was expected to result in action or a resolution through HNP intervention, 17 said their problem had been resolved, 4 reported waiting for a resolution, while 19 stated the problem had not been resolved. On balance, 73 percent of these 40 respondents indicated that they would go back to a police station if they needed help or assistance in the future.

THEME 2 RECOMMENDATIONS (CRIME AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION, RESPONSE, AND SANCTIONING)

To improve citizen security, USG actors should not seek incremental improvements in the HNP or formal justice system. Instead, they should target resources toward the efforts of Haitians to renew the democratic process and full implementation of the 1987 Constitution. This is because donor support to the justice sector will not amount to sustainable improvements in the absence of an accountable GOH.

- CREATE A COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR CRIME REDUCTION:** USAID and other USG actors should develop a comprehensive strategic framework for crime reduction in Haiti and monitor its implementation by local government and security actors. This effort should be led in collaboration with Haitian civil society, bring together governmental and security sector stakeholders, and include gang leaders in the process so far as permitted by U.S. law.
- SUPPORT AN INFORMAL JUSTICE APPROACH TO AIDING VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE:** Given the challenges citizens face with the formal justice system, USAID should initiate an activity that supports victims of violence (especially gang violence) with a focus on informal justice. The activity could provide grants and technical assistance to informal Haitian institutions, building their capacity to assist victims of violence and resolve conflict. Such institutions would include lawyers, legal aid offices, CSOs, religious leaders, and community leaders.

- **CREATE AN INDEPENDENT BODY TO UNDERMINE TRANSNATIONAL CRIMINAL NETWORKS:**

Some of the key tools used to unravel criminal networks include forensic analysis of financial activities and intelligence gathering via communications surveillance. The HNP has a unit focused on forensic analysis, but it is unable to investigate effectively, and their findings are not acted upon decisively. USAID and other USG actors, such as the DEA and INL, could help create an independent body focused on these activities. This body should collaborate with the UN and Interpol to hire properly-vetted Haitians who have the skills, experience, and will undertake this mission. The body could also provide capacity-building support for the HNP Financial Crimes Unit to advance investigations and work internationally to undermine criminal networks.

THEME 3: SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND POLITICAL DETERMINANTS OF INSECURITY AND VIOLENCE

ECONOMY AND LABOR MARKET

Haitian insecurity is closely related to the country's broader economic strife. The 2017 Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) AmericasBarometer survey indicated that 81 percent of respondents thought the economy had deteriorated in the 12 months prior to the survey.⁵⁴ Likewise, nearly all CSA youth FGDs cited poverty and food insecurity as critical factors contributing to insecurity in Haiti.

A range of CSA interviews noted mechanisms through which insecurity undermines the already-weak economy. For example, high levels of insecurity disrupt already-limited economic activities. Such restrictions result in higher prices for basic goods and fuel, affecting households and transporters. Higher prices and losses of already-limited economic opportunities increase pressure on economically strained households. The combination of economic strain and insecurity may then push some to join gangs, which reinforces this cycle. Similarly, insecurity negatively affects the environment for business operations and investment. The assessment team found that typically small, informal Haitian businesses and even most formal businesses are subject to extortion by gangs and increased security costs.

Assessment Question: What role do the economy and labor market play in fueling violence and gangs?

Unemployment is high, particularly in Port-au-Prince and for youth who are most likely to be involved in gangs. Entrepreneurship and operating a business in Haiti are also fraught with challenges. As a result, poverty and food insecurity are rampant. Combined with idleness and discouragement, poverty and hunger can make youth's gang involvement enticing, despite the known risks. Inequality is high in Haiti and politicians have not implemented plans to improve the situation, such as a minimum wage. Most disadvantaged Haitians live in poor conditions in areas that are geographically or socially secluded and as a result, are prone to developing criminal activities and groups.

UNEMPLOYMENT AND EMPLOYMENT DISCRIMINATION: The World Bank estimates that unemployment peaked at 16.8 percent in 2007, declined to approximately 14 percent between 2011 and 2019, and increased to 15.7 percent in 2021.⁵⁵ The 2021 unemployment figure is nearly 6 percentage points higher than the regional average that year.⁵⁶ The 2017 AmericasBarometer survey found that only 23 percent of 2,221 respondents worked, while 40.4 percent actively looked for a job, which was the highest rate reported in AmericasBarometer surveys that year.⁵⁷ Respondents in Port-au-Prince and surrounding areas were even more affected by unemployment – 52.1 percent reported actively looking for a job. The unemployment rate for women and youth followed a similar trend but was significantly higher. The 2021 unemployment rate for women was more than 3 percentage points higher than the overall rate and nearly twice as high (35 percent) for youth aged 15-24.

The CSA survey provides various insights regarding employment, which appears to be relatively low in Haiti. As shown in *Figure 18*, a mere 12.5 percent of CSA respondents reported having a salaried job. This statistic is even more concerning considering that the survey sample appears to be more educated

⁵⁴ The 2021 AmericasBarometer results should be available in late 2022 and are likely to be even worse than 2017 results, given global and Haiti-specific developments over the past 5 years.

⁵⁵ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.ZS?end=2021&locations=HT&start=2000&view=chart>.

⁵⁶ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.ZS?locations=ZJ>

⁵⁷ https://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/haiti/AB2017_Haiti_RRR_Presentation_V5_W_11.26.19.pdf.

than the overall Haitian population. Strikingly, the percentage of women in our sample who had a salaried job was nearly half that of men (8.4 percent vs. 15.6 percent.) There are also significant differences between age groups. The 44–55 age group had the highest percentage of salaried jobs at 17.4 percent, whereas the 18–29 age group had the lowest at 10 percent.

Figure 18: Analysis of survey data related to salaried jobs and number of livelihood activities

DESCRIPTOR	SEX		AGE GROUPS				LOCATION		TOTAL
	MALE	FEMALE	18–29	30–39	40–45	55+	OUEST	REST OF HAITI	
Salaried job									
Yes	15.6%	8.4%	10.0%	13.1%	17.4%	13.3%	14.1%	11.3%	12.6%
No	84.4%	91.6%	90.0%	86.9%	32.6%	86.7%	85.9%	88.7%	87.5%
Livelihood activity									
None	29.7%	50.5%	47.2%	31.7%	28.9%	30.0%	41.2%	36.4%	38.5%
One	57.2%	45.5%	47.5%	57.4%	56.4%	53.3%	54.7%	50.3%	52.2%
Two	10.4%	3.7%	5.0%	8.2%	10.7%	16.7%	4.2%	10.3%	7.6%
Three	2.0%	0.3%	0.0%	1.6%	4.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.3%	1.3%
Four	0.7%	0.0%	0.3%	1.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%	0.4%

Among the 12.6 percent who reported having a salaried job, 38.6 percent reported they worked for a company or private business, 25 percent said that they had a state job, and 14.8 percent stated they worked in education. The remainder reported other jobs, including for an NGO or a private residence. Of individuals who reported a salaried job, 39.7 percent also reported other livelihood activities. Among the 87.5 percent of respondents who did report a salaried job, 55 percent noted one livelihood activity, 7.5 percent two, 1.5 percent three, and 35.3 percent indicated none. There are, once again, striking differences between men and women, because women were nearly twice as likely than men to have no livelihood activity. Older respondents (above the 18–29 age group) were more likely to have two or more livelihood activities.

While the agricultural sector provides employment for approximately half the Haitian labor force, nearly two-thirds survive on subsistence agriculture and approximately 78 percent of households are in some way involved in agricultural activities.⁵⁸ Urban households are more likely to rely on petty trade and salaried work than rural ones. CSA survey findings somewhat deviate from these older figures – the most common categories of livelihood reported by respondents were trade (25 percent); other activities (14 percent); skilled manual labor such as masonry, plumbing, mechanical, and electrical work

⁵⁸ De Oliveira, Walter. 2021. “Pathways for Haiti’s Development.” Available [here](#).

(12 percent); and growing food crops (11 percent). Women were disproportionately overrepresented in trade and storefront commerce, while heavily underrepresented in skilled labor.

Most CSA survey respondents who had a salaried job had at least completed secondary education (85 percent) and more than half had started or completed tertiary education (defined as university, technical, or vocational training). Most skilled workers⁵⁹ in our survey also had at least completed secondary education. However, this should not be construed as indicative of strong or widespread returns to education. Those who have a salaried job only make up 17.7 percent of those who have at least completed secondary education and are not students; 32.6 percent of those who at least completed secondary education and were not students had no salaried job or livelihood activity.

Responses from FGDs and KIs reinforce CSA survey findings and highlight that finding a salaried job is very difficult. Youth FGDs noted that there was a dire lack of structures for youth to find and pursue job opportunities, such as job sites. As a result, jobs are often found through word of mouth or intermediaries. Youth FGD participants also noted that employers often had a series of criteria that were difficult to meet, such as 3 to 5 years of work experience. Another respondent in Les Cayes and a former member of the Chamber of Deputies separately noted that youth with connections (and who did not meet required criteria) often filled positions. Another male respondent from Delmas, who was unemployed and completed university, noted: “I will be 30 years old. I haven’t found a job yet. I’ve never worked a month in my life. In what other country is this happening? I have a 20-year-old nephew who has been working in the [United States] since he was 17 or 18 years old. [...] So today, those who put us where we are, they’re the ones who can get us out of this. Yesterday, we tried, we struggled, but lucky for us, they killed the dream.”

Several women in Delmas reported challenges faced in job-seeking: intermediaries might ask for sexual favors for female job-seekers to be considered for the position or require remuneration otherwise. In the latter case, youth agreed that in the end, their net gain for a few days of work was just a few hundred gourds.

Haitian women are typically limited in access to financial markets due to traditional caretaking and household responsibilities. Only 17 percent of women have access to formal and informal financial services.⁶⁰ According to the 2016 USAID Gender Assessment, women “have limited participation in the most viable value chains, and they have inadequate access to productive lands or control over resources, all of which affects their diet and consumption patterns.” Agricultural value chains favor men. Usually, male farmers are in charge of land ownership, farming, and household decision-making. Women are involved in selling crops but “have limited knowledge or access to extension services or business support services.” Women are rarely involved in higher-income export activities.

Women are also 6 percentage points more likely to make less than the minimum wage, even when accounting for industry type.⁶¹ Moreover, women make 32 percent less per hour than men when accounting for education and sector.⁶² Women in academia are underrepresented and face toxic norms

⁵⁹ Workers who have special skill, training and/or knowledge they can apply to their work. These are often obtained through university or technical school but can also be acquired by learning on the job.

⁶⁰ USAID. 2016. “USAID/Haiti Gender Assessment.” (September 20). Accessed November 14, 2022.

<https://banyanglobal.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/USAID-Haiti-Gender-Assessment.pdf>.

⁶¹ Justesen, Michael and Dorte Verner. 2007. “Factors Impacting Youth Development in Haiti.” Policy Research Working Paper; No. 4110. Washington, D.C.: World Bank. Accessed November 14, 2022.

<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/6884>.

⁶² USAID, 2016.

of transactional sex and sexual harassment. A large portion of workers in trade sectors are women (70 percent), the majority of whom are self-employed. However, when it comes to education and health care, both better paying sectors, women compose less than half of workers.⁶³

POVERTY AND FOOD INSECURITY: Haiti's difficult job market leads directly to poverty and food insecurity. The World Bank estimated Haiti's 2021 poverty rate at 52.3 percent, and approximately two-thirds of those in poverty live in rural areas.⁶⁴ Poverty in Haiti is highly correlated with food insecurity, low economic growth, and natural disasters. In March–June 2022, Haiti had 4.5 million citizens who faced acute food insecurity (45 percent of the population).⁶⁵ These figures have been rising due to greater insecurity and an increase in food prices. Market constraints, especially price volatility, are a major contributor to food insecurity in Haiti, because most households rely on market purchases for the vast majority of food baskets. One female respondent from Delmas noted: “The poor are suffering and can’t eat. If you don’t have money, hunger can kill you. We can’t earn money and insecurity is everywhere.”

Several interviewees, including religious leaders, community leaders, and nearly all youth FGDs cited poverty and food insecurity as critically important factors contributing to insecurity in Haiti. Respondents articulated that low returns on education meant that youth who got an education nonetheless remained unemployed or underemployed, while those who did not further their education had even fewer livelihood options. Combined with idleness and discouragement, poverty and hunger can make gang involvement by youth enticing, despite the known risks. Interviewees and youth FGDs from Croix-des-Bouquets and Martissant also mentioned idleness and a lack of existing community structures as important factors in gang recruitment.

OPERATING A BUSINESS IN HAITI AND GOVERNMENT ECONOMIC PLANNING: The 2020 World Bank Doing Business Index ranked Haiti in 179th place out of 190 countries.⁶⁶ A more detailed breakdown of how Haiti scores on different indices is displayed in *Figure 19*. The country performs poorly in most categories, except trading across borders, and particularly below par on metrics regarding starting a business, registering property, dealing with permits, and protecting minority investors. Haiti's access to credit score improved somewhat in 2020 from previous years, due to efforts to expand the coverage of the credit bureau, which enabled improved credit information access.

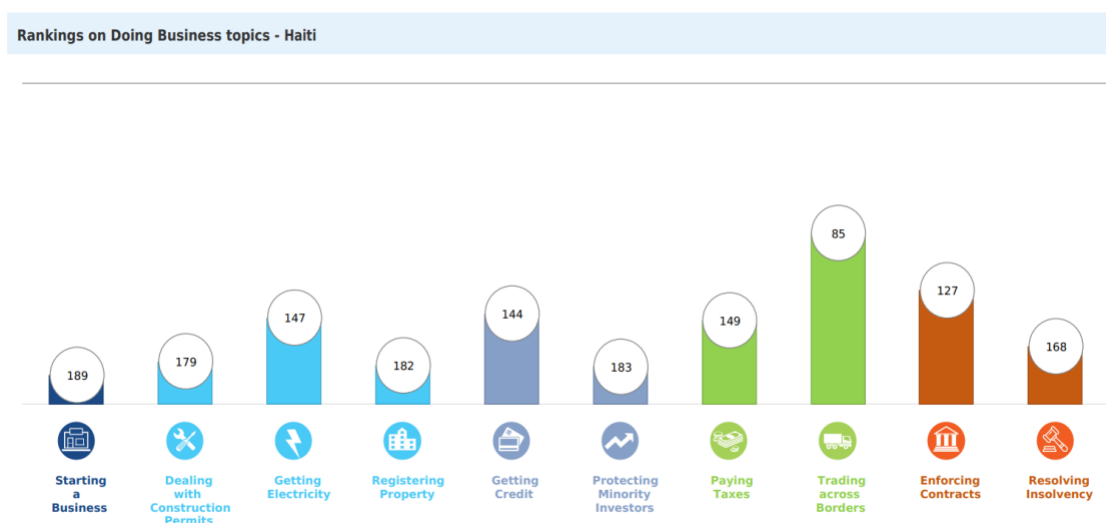
⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ World Bank Group. n.d. “The World Bank in Haiti.” Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/haiti/overview#1>.

⁶⁵ Integrated Food Security Phase Classification. 2022. “Haiti: Acute Food Insecurity Projection Update March–June 2022.” Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://www.ipcinfo.org/ipc-country-analysis/details-map/en/c/1155488/?iso3=HTI>.

⁶⁶ The World Bank's 2020 Doing Business Haiti country profile, the latest available at the time of writing, is available at: <https://archive.doingbusiness.org/content/dam/doingBusiness/country/h/haiti/HTI.pdf>.

Figure 19: Haiti's ranking in the World Bank Doing Business Index



CSA interviews with entrepreneurs highlighted similar weaknesses. One private sector actor noted that while costs associated with business administration were relatively low, the costs in time and money when dealing with GOH processes (e.g., obtaining permits and registering businesses) were disproportionately high. They also noted that recommendations from recent business environment studies were largely not implemented. President Martelly's focus on the "Haiti open for business" agenda included no coherent prioritization among development objectives or investments and offered no strategy to address structural inequities. High security costs are also recognized as a major driver of overhead for businesses operating in Haiti. These costs include paying for private security protection during the transit and storage of goods and potentially, paying gangs for the ability to safely operate or move goods. Another business leader noted the inability to use the courts to enforce business contracts due to a lack of a functioning judiciary, which represents an additional challenge of doing business.

Access to credit and capital were also noted as barriers. The final performance evaluation of USAID's Local Value Chain Enhancement Activity noted that "Haitian commercial banks do not offer businesses access to capital at interest rates that many businesses can afford, according to interviewees. [Micro, small, and medium enterprises] can simply not afford the 22 percent loans that exist today, especially for higher risk sectors and value chains."⁶⁷ A gang leader who runs several businesses (e.g., car rental companies) noted that there was virtually no support for small businesses and their owners in Haiti; funds for development projects were co-opted by the powerful and banks were not interested in lending. He stated that gang activities enabled entrepreneurship by providing capital and security, and other gang members used similar approaches, because entrepreneurship is the only non-gang-affiliated way to generate income in his neighborhood.

A trade association echoed that funding businesses in Haiti was difficult due to the country's overall lack of growth, which limited incentives for banks to finance and invest. The few large projects that are contemplated are seen as too risky, whereas the smaller projects that need financing the most are too small to interest Haitian banks. However, one citizen security expert mentioned there was an opportunity today to increase investment in small businesses, because the GOH has opened additional

⁶⁷ USAID. "Performance Evaluation Report: Local Enterprise and Value Chain Enhancement (LEVE) Activity." Social Impact, Inc. July 2019. https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00VHSK.pdf.

lines of credit to combat rising prices of food and commodities. A significant part of that money is meant to be invested in development projects, according to the expert.

Another important business environment factor is exports. Trade association representatives said there were programs to facilitate textile exports and (secondarily) agricultural products with the United States and others.⁶⁸ However, the representatives felt that these programs were largely wasted because the business environment made producing goods for export too difficult. Data from the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative confirm that Haiti's top export categories in 2019 were textiles (overwhelmingly), mangos, and cosmetics.⁶⁹ Total exports to the US were valued at USD 1.1 billion. A trade association representative indicated that export products like coffee, cocoa, and crafts had declined significantly; crafts had also suffered from the sharp drop in cruise tourism due to COVID-19. World Bank trade data also show an approximately 24-percent decline in exports between 2018 and 2020, and a similar trend for foreign direct investment into Haiti.⁷⁰

INEQUALITY: There is a dramatic wealth gap between the rich and poor in Haiti. The poorest 40 percent of Haitians have access to less than 6 percent of Haiti's income. The richest 20 percent of the population holds more than 64 percent of the country's total wealth.⁷¹ Data reflecting the impact of the insecurity crisis and other global shocks are not available, although the factors previously noted will likely contribute to increased inequality. A donor official explained that the past economic plans never led to serious action to affect inequality; specifically, a minimum wage had not been implemented, inflation remained high, and the informal sector continued to grow. The official also pointed out that the national deficit had risen significantly with virtually no achievements, which limited the scope and ambition of activities that needed to happen to address economic and social challenges. Further, he noted that tax collection was poor due to corruption, politics, and the lack of a functioning judiciary.

A striking observation, provided by the same official, was that members of the Haitian diaspora who returned or set up a business often avoided paying taxes, even though they likely paid these fees in their host countries. A perspective reported by a range of respondents, from citizen security experts and academics to Haitian youth, is that elites needed to make more concessions to improve society. One citizen security expert noted: "The socioeconomic situation of most Haitians is dominated by an elite controlling the import/export and not investing their money in the country. They instead live abroad with their families but maintain control and influence of things in Haiti. Contrast that with the [Dominican Republic], where it seems people invest money (legally made or not) back into the country. The truth is, not investing in Haiti works just fine for the Haitian politicians and the private sector (and those who switch back and forth between these categories), so they are not compelled to change."

SELF-REINFORCING CYCLE OF INSECURITY AND ECONOMIC STRAIN: A daunting challenge is that insecurity continues to severely undermine the economy. Haiti faces a self-reinforcing cycle, and a range of CSA interviews uncovered a variety of mechanisms through which insecurity undermined the already

⁶⁸ These programs include the Caribbean Basin Initiative, the Caribbean Basin Trade Partnership Agreement, the Haitian Hemispheric Opportunity through Partnership Encouragement Act II, and the Haitian Economic Lift Program Act. There are also at least nine free trade zones licensed in Haiti, including several in the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area and in the north (e.g., Trou du Nord and Ouanaminthe).

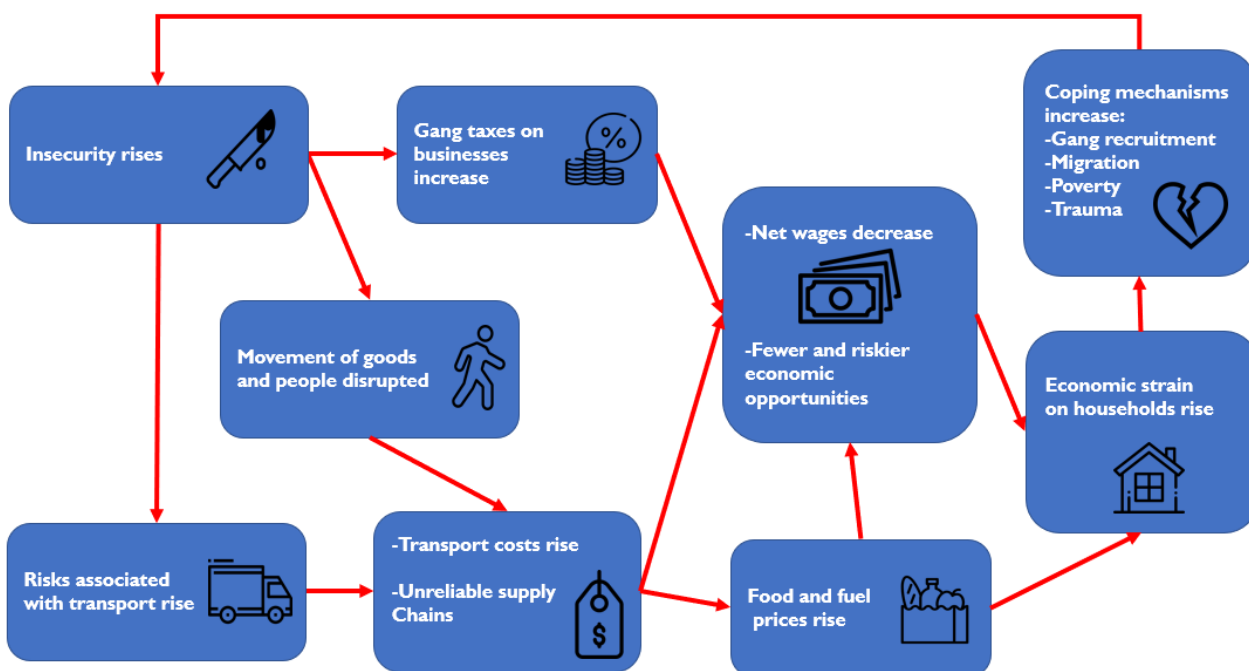
⁶⁹ Office of the United States Trade Representative. "Haiti." n.d. <https://ustr.gov/countries-regions/americas/haiti#:~:text=Haiti%20is%20currently%20our%2077th,was%20%24%20million%20in%202019.>

⁷⁰ More detail available at https://tcdata360.worldbank.org/countries/HTI?indicator=IS4I&countries=BRA&viz=line_chart&years=1970,2019&country=HTI.

⁷¹ World Bank Group, n.d.

weak economy. Figure 20 schematizes this dynamic, elaborated by the assessment team as a result of its extensive literature review and analysis of primary and secondary data.

Figure 20: Diagram of the self-reinforcing cycle of insecurity and economic strain



First, high levels of insecurity heavily disrupt already limited economic and professional activities. The second-order effect of these restrictions and increased risks are higher prices for basic goods and fuel, affecting households and transporters. Respondents indicated that some workers were willing to make dangerous trips every day to maintain their job because they felt like they had no choice. The price of agricultural goods coming from rural areas or ports outside of Port-au-Prince also rises due to the increased fuel costs, risks of loss and harm to those involved in the transport, and the possible need to pay gangs for safe passage. These factors also affect the ability of rural dwellers to sell agricultural products and buy imported goods. Because Haiti is heavily dependent on food imports, local goods are unable to compensate for these disruptions, which may push prices higher still. This mechanism is particularly disruptive to Haiti's economy, because economic activities are highly centralized in Port-au-Prince, which is the area the most affected by insecurity and gang violence. Another factor is the steady deterioration of the exchange rate in a country that relies heavily on imports.

Higher prices, lower net wages, and losses of already limited economic opportunities increase pressure on previously economically strained Haitian households. The combination of economic strain and stress tied to insecurity may then push some to join gangs, which reinforces the cycle. Insecurity, impunity, and the proliferation of gangs can also increase the likelihood that businesses must pay a "tax" to one or more gangs and may affect the amount they are asked to pay. A CSO leader in Croix-des-Bouquets noted: "Some businesses in the area have had to close because they get taxed HTG 5,000 every Saturday and they can't sustain themselves in that scenario." These factors place already precarious informal and small businesses in a challenging situation.

Other mechanisms are tied to migration and the Haitian diaspora. According to Haitian youth, NGOs, and others, brain drain has accelerated from previously high levels. Those who cannot migrate legally are also more willing to take risks and undertake irregular migration, because risks at home are high and perceived to be increasing while opportunity is decreasing. One female trader in Les Cayes noted: “Those who remain are those who can’t leave, who are brave, or who are part of the problem.” Additionally, the diaspora, which may come back to visit family and consider investing in Haiti is deterred from doing so under the present security climate, which affects Haitian economic activities. This phenomenon also sends a negative signal to youth who still have hope and have not left, as noted by one CSO leader. Notably, a former gang leader turned community leader stated: “When even the rich and the diaspora cannot invest in the country anymore, the country is as good as dead.”

In addition, a Les Cayes FGD also noted that agriculture was plagued by economic and climate challenges, and that rainy seasons and temperatures had become harder to predict. The assessment team’s extensive literature review also demonstrates that rural Haitians are particularly vulnerable to climate disasters that affect security and income, and they only have one-third of the per capita income of those living in urban areas. Access to land for cultivation is also a critical issue for Haiti’s rural farming population. Nationally, 61 percent of households own or have access to agricultural land: 37 percent of urban residents and 77 percent of rural residents.⁷² Several respondents also noted that COVID-19 had negative consequences on the already weakened and stumbling Haitian economy. For a period of time, the international airport and the border with the Dominican Republic were closed, affecting supply chains and reducing demand for labor.

Assessment Question: What opportunities exist for Haitian youth to acquire skills and make a living?

Economic opportunities are difficult to come by, and even those with an advanced education face employment discrimination based on where they live. Issues with the quality of technical and vocational education and training (TVET), such as lack of qualified teachers and equipment, and universities compound the challenge youth face.

As previously detailed, youth face various challenges in terms of economic opportunity, including due to labor market obstacles and lack of community structures, which are conflated by rising insecurity. Another potential challenge noted by some youth (from poor and crime-ridden neighborhoods in particular) is discrimination based on their address or neighborhood. Anecdotally, when applying for jobs, some were told that companies did not hire people from neighborhoods like Delmas 2.

One entrepreneur pointed to opportunity, rather than skills, as the problem for youth: “If someone can throw a rock as far as some of these kids have thrown rocks into Delimart, perhaps they should be baseball players. They have the skill but not the opportunities.” A trade association representative also said that finding qualified workers was not difficult in Haiti. However, he noted that due to brain drain, it was more difficult to recruit for more experienced and educated positions, particularly middle-upper management and doctors. That same representative noted that professional training could still be significantly improved in Haiti. Much of Haiti’s professional training happens on the job, and schools that provide professional training have been negatively affected by brain drain.

⁷² CNSA. 2019. “Enquête Nationale d’Urgence sur la Sécurité Alimentaire et Nutritionnelle (ENUSAN).” Available [here](#).

Shortcomings in skills training pose additional challenges for youth's economic opportunity. The final performance evaluation of USAID's *Local Enterprise and Value Chain Enhancement (LEVE) Activity* highlighted a lack of adequate materials and poor teacher quality at TVET institutions as negatively affecting student training.⁷³ This same evaluation also emphasized the importance of matching training with private sector's needs. Several TVET students interviewed noted that while they were happy with the skills they had learned, at this point, their skills were often more sophisticated than necessary in the Haitian job market. This was particularly true for certain sectors, such as welding. This phenomenon might lead to more brain drain, but also greater remittances. Finally, the evaluation pointed to the value of creating and maintaining platforms to connect trained individuals with employers. The LEVE Activity funded job placement services at TVETs, which was greatly appreciated because TVET institutions in Haiti typically only train students. The general conclusion of the evaluation was that TVETs in Haiti "need to review their programs and training curricula, become self-sustaining businesses, require ongoing training of trainers, and provide links to industry."

EDUCATION SYSTEM

As detailed in this section, schools play an important role in fostering youth's development and access to economic opportunity by keeping youth busy, in a well-established structure, and giving them opportunities to find employment or develop a livelihood activity to earn sufficient income. The assessment team found that none of these roles were adequately met by the majority of current Haitian education institutions at either the primary or secondary levels; they are failing in multiple ways to deliver key elements that might dampen gang and criminal activity.

Reflecting a lack of the GOH's investment in basic services, education in Haiti is mostly private and its costs represent a significant expenditure for households, thus challenging access to education for most Haitian youth. Another obstacle is that insecurity has led to the closure of many public and private schools for extended periods of time. CSA respondents indicated that various factors negatively affected the quality of Haitian education, including teachers' pay, training, and overcrowded classrooms. As a result, youth reported to the assessment team that they were well aware of the low returns on education in Haiti, which was further evidenced by high dropout rates. Such challenges allow for gangs to entice youth through income-generating criminal activity.

Assessment Question: What role does education play in violence and gangs? What relationship, if any, exists between education outcomes and violence and gangs? What elements of approaches to education may exacerbate violence and gang involvement?

Schools also lack psychological support, which is increasingly important after natural disasters and during the current violence crisis. In addition, youth are well aware of the low returns on education in Haiti. In combination, these factors lead to a high dropout rate, especially with regard to secondary school, preventing schools from fulfilling the important objective of keeping youth busy in a well-established structure. Such factors increase youth's vulnerability to gang recruitment, particularly through economic incentive.

ACCESS TO EDUCATION: Studies reveal that the cost of primary and secondary education in Haiti represents between 10 and 59 percent of a household's income, which reflects a relatively high cost

⁷³ USAID/Haiti Local Enterprise Value Chain Enhancement Activity (LEVE) Final Performance Evaluation. July 2019. https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00VHSK.pdf

globally.⁷⁴ Private education plays a major role in the Haitian education system, making up approximately 88 percent of all schools, while an approximate 30 percent of these are accredited.⁷⁵

High costs are a major cause of students' dropout. As of 2019, there are nearly 500,000 children between the ages of 5 and 18 who are out of the school system.⁷⁶ Of the out-of-school children, 66 percent are located in rural areas.⁷⁷ The net enrollment rate at primary schools in Haiti in 2012 was 74 percent; for secondary schools, it was 36 percent.⁷⁸ Several CSO and religious leaders who operate schools reported a significant rise in parents having trouble paying for school, with annual enrollment fees such as HTG 1,500 (approximately USD \$13). Moreover, according to a number of Haitian CSOs, impoverished children are often subject to sexual exploitation and abuse through prostitution in order to pay for essentials such as school expenses.⁷⁹

A key function of the education system is to keep youth busy and in a well-established structure. High dropout rates mean many children are not benefiting from this function, and insecurity has led to the closure of many public and private schools for extended periods of time.⁸⁰

Several CSO leaders noted that youth were cognizant of low return on education in Haiti. Youth FGD participants constantly expressed their frustration about the degree to which the positive narrative of return on education was false. As noted previously, most youth FGD participants had completed secondary school and university, yet many were still hungry, unable to find a way to earn money, and disappointed by the low return on investment in education.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION: FGDs, KIs, and secondary data indicate that various factors negatively affect the quality of Haitian education, including teachers' pay, teacher training, and overcrowded classrooms. According to USAID/Haiti's 2016 Education Factsheet, 80 percent of teachers have not received any pre-service training and nearly one-half of students who complete second grade cannot read a single word. Teachers are also poorly paid and consequently, lack enthusiasm. In addition, youth FGD participants repeatedly mentioned classroom crowding. A Delmas FGD revealed that it was not uncommon for classrooms designed for 20 students to hold three to five times as many students. Over-aged students and those repeating grades are also a burden on the education system's capacity.

Further, KIs with citizen security experts and CSOs revealed that schools had few recreational opportunities, little consideration for pedagogical principles, and did not foster autonomy or civic principles. Lack of literacy and civic education puts those citizens at a disadvantage with regard to access to justice and rights, as well as the aforementioned challenges in economic opportunity.

SUPPORT SERVICES: Schools also lack psychological support, which was noted as increasingly important after natural disasters and during the current security crisis. Exposure to violence affects a child's academic performance, and there is an insufficient number of staff trained to work with children exposed to violence and trauma. In 20 percent of households with a child in elementary school, the child

⁷⁴ USAID, 2016.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ministre de l'Éducation Nationale et de la Formation Professionnelle. 2019. "Politique nationale d'éducation non-formelle en Haïti." Accessed November 14, 2022. <http://sef.gouv.ht/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/POLITIQUE-NATIONALE-DEDUCATION-NON-FORMEL.pdf>.

⁷⁷ USAID. 2014. "Study on the Access of Children and Youth in the 6-18 Age Group to Education Services."

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ U.S. Department of State. 2019. "Human Rights Reports Custom Report Excerpts: Haiti." Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://www.state.gov/report/custom/c14a2f073b/>.

⁸⁰ <https://www.unicef.org/haiti/communiqu%C3%A9s-de-presse/haiti-une-ecole-sur-trois-est-cible-de-violence-a-port-au-prince>

has witnessed violence.⁸¹ In addition, married youth aged 20 to 24 who experience domestic violence are much more likely to leave school than unmarried youth. The same lack of professional support applies for children with disabilities; persons with disabilities make up 10 percent of the Haitian population.⁸²

UNIVERSITIES: As supported by FGDs and KIIs, the situation for universities is similar to that of primary and secondary education. Costs are a major factor that limit access to and completion of tertiary studies. Several youth FGD participants noted that it often took a job or a relatively wealthy family to be able to attend university in Haiti, excluding the vast majority of Haitians and perpetuating inequality. Compounding this issue, youth FGDs also reported first- and second-hand experiences with discriminatory practices in university admissions. All examples were perceived to be due to the applicant's address, regardless of academic merit, because they may be seen as "troublemakers." Such discrimination aligns with similar experiences in the job market, as previously mentioned. These issues further entrench inequality, lack of opportunity, and diminishing hope for those who do not live in areas deemed "good enough." Lastly, universities suffer from a lack of standards and their enforcement, which leads to varying education quality. Of approximately 200 universities nation-wide, only 54 universities are officially approved by the Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training; the majority of schools do not conform to university standards.⁸³

COMMUNITY AND FAMILY

As detailed in this section, Haitian families and communities (particularly in gang-controlled and other poor communities) face both day-to-day and long-term challenges exacerbated by the ongoing insecurity. The assessment team found that vulnerability factors included poverty and food insecurity, a lack of a stable family environment, the absence of community support (including basic services), and inadequate education. Interviews also highlighted a challenge to traditional family and community morals, which manifests itself in the normalization of violence and a lack of solidarity within communities.

While some slums have been historically vulnerable to violence, they have shown resilience through mechanisms such as monitoring their neighborhood, participating in community organizations, or joining religious communities. However, factors beyond communities' control have facilitated the expansion of gangs, challenging such resilience measures. Rising violence makes some neighborhoods ungovernable and forces residents to leave; those who remain live under gang control. In this context, neither government (including HNP) nor community actors can meet citizens' needs. The assessment team found that some religious leaders aimed to negotiate improved conditions with gangs, although without much success, because even churches cannot operate in certain neighborhoods. As a result, Haitian communities are increasingly vulnerable to insecurity.

Assessment Question: What are some of the characteristics that make communities more or less vulnerable or resilient to insecurity, violence, and gang activity?

Poverty and food insecurity, the lack of a stable family environment for Haitian youth, the absence or low quality of community support (such as basic services), and the state of education previously discussed were all factors found to increase community vulnerability to insecurity. Interviews also highlighted a challenge to traditional family and community morals, which manifests itself in the

⁸¹ Justesen and Dorte, 2007.

⁸² Lainy, Rochambeau. 2020. "Le handicap à l'école haïtien: Résultats préliminaires d'une recherche-action dans le grand Sud d'Haïti à la suite de l'ouragan." (March 28). Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://zenodo.org/record/3732084#.YutZxuzMI1J>.

⁸³ USAID, 2016.

normalization of violence and a lack of solidarity within communities. Factors found to reduce vulnerability to insecurity include modification of daily habits to adapt to the evolving context.

Slums in Haitian urban communities have been vulnerable to high levels of violence for decades. To a certain degree, governments, police, and community organizations have become resilient to such violence and have learned how to provide services as well as they can. Families and other residents, while still vulnerable to violence, have adapted their lives and expectations to the situation. However, in the last few years, the extraordinary levels of violence associated with the growth of gangs have prevented most organizations from operating in slum areas and have forced many families to flee. Other communities have only recently been affected by high levels of gang activity, which increases their vulnerability to violence because institutions and families could be relatively less resilient.

STUDIES ON VULNERABILITY TO INSECURITY, VIOLENCE, AND GANG ACTIVITY: A worldwide literature review of risk factors for gang membership previously identified several related to community vulnerability and resilience to insecurity, violence, and gang activity.⁸⁴ One study concluded that youth turned to gangs when they lacked social bonds and structure from their schools or homes. For example, communities can contribute to the growth of gangs if they do not actively discourage gang membership. This phenomenon is particularly true in neighborhoods where relations and social institutions have broken down. Communities characterized by high levels of poverty and unemployment are also more likely to host gangs than wealthier communities. However, poor parent–child and neighborhood relations are more important factors than poverty in encouraging adolescent males to join gangs.⁸⁵

Families play a major role in facilitating or discouraging gang membership. If a family does not provide adequate basic needs or a community lacks social services, they indirectly encourage (typically) male adolescent children to meet these needs through gang membership. This is particularly true for families that lack appropriate role models, such as homes where fathers are absent. Further, a study of a Haitian spike in violence in 2005–2007 (Operation Baghdad) found that increased violence was associated with the inability of the HNP to provide security and the lack of social services for street children, child victims of domestic violence, and mistreated child domestic servants (*restaveks*).⁸⁶

VULNERABILITY FACTORS IDENTIFIED THROUGH CSA RESPONSES

KIs, FGDs, and survey responses demonstrate that Haitian communities and families, particularly those in slums, are very vulnerable to insecurity, violence, and gang activities. While previously many Haitian communities and families showed some degree of resilience to lower levels of violence, the current crisis has overwhelmed coping tactics, created a sense of anguish in the community, and caused many people to leave.

MORALITY: Many Haitians believe that increases in violence are the results of moral failures, including a former HNP chief who shared, “There is a moral collapse in our society. Youngsters are led by bad examples. They see easy money.” One aspect of this idea of moral failure is the acceptance and

⁸⁴ Campbell, Cherelle. 2014. “Risk factors associated with gang membership: A Review of the Literature.” Accessed November 14, 2022. https://www.academia.edu/39505200/Risk_factors_associated_with_gang_membership_A_Review_of_the_Literature.

⁸⁵ Lunde, Henriette. 2012. “The Violent Lifeworlds of Young Haitians: Gangs as Livelihood in a Port-au-Prince Ghetto.” Fafo Research Foundation, The Haiti Youth Project. Accessed November 14, 2022. https://www.fafo.no/media/com_netsukii/10149.pdf.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

normalization of violence. There is also an absence of solidarity or sense of collective responsibility, which many believed was an important part of Haitian culture.

The CSA survey confirms these perceived changes in Haitian morals. With regards to attitudes toward others in their neighborhood, 40 percent stated they would help each other, 31 percent said they would go their own way, and 27 percent noted they would do both depending on the situation. Interestingly, respondents in the Ouest department were more likely to report a “go our own way” attitude; they selected that option 11 percentage points more frequently than the rest of survey participants from other departments.

POVERTY: Poverty forces families to do things that they would have previously found unacceptable. For example, some families in poverty allow their children to sleep in the streets or engage in illicit activities to obtain income. As previously detailed, poverty also makes community members (specifically youth) more vulnerable to gang recruitment for factors such as lack of economic opportunity or access to education.

FAMILY STRUCTURE: The absence, unavailability, or poverty of fathers and the lack of a stable family environment are important factors that make youth vulnerable to gang recruitment. A CSO leader further explained, “They have fathers, that’s not the problem, it’s that their fathers can’t do anything for them financially ... That’s why a lot of kids who get engaged in gangs, their parents don’t have any moral authority, because they don’t depend on the father for anything.” Similarly, a young woman in a Les Cayes FGD addressed the links between families and delinquency, arguing that the decision to become delinquent did not occur overnight: “It is true that many young people commit crimes, but it is not in a single day they become delinquent. I think it has to do with parental resignation. These days, parents have four or five children. These children are sometimes forced to leave their homes and neighborhoods and move elsewhere. [...] Older kids who have already joined a gang, they recruit these children.”

POOR COMMUNITY SUPPORT: The absence or low quality of community support is another important factor that exacerbates vulnerability to violence. Many slum communities lack basic infrastructure and hygiene, which contributes to feelings of fear and hopelessness, especially when there is no light. Poor access to education and psychological services, as previously detailed, also add to a lack of perceived support and vulnerability to violence.

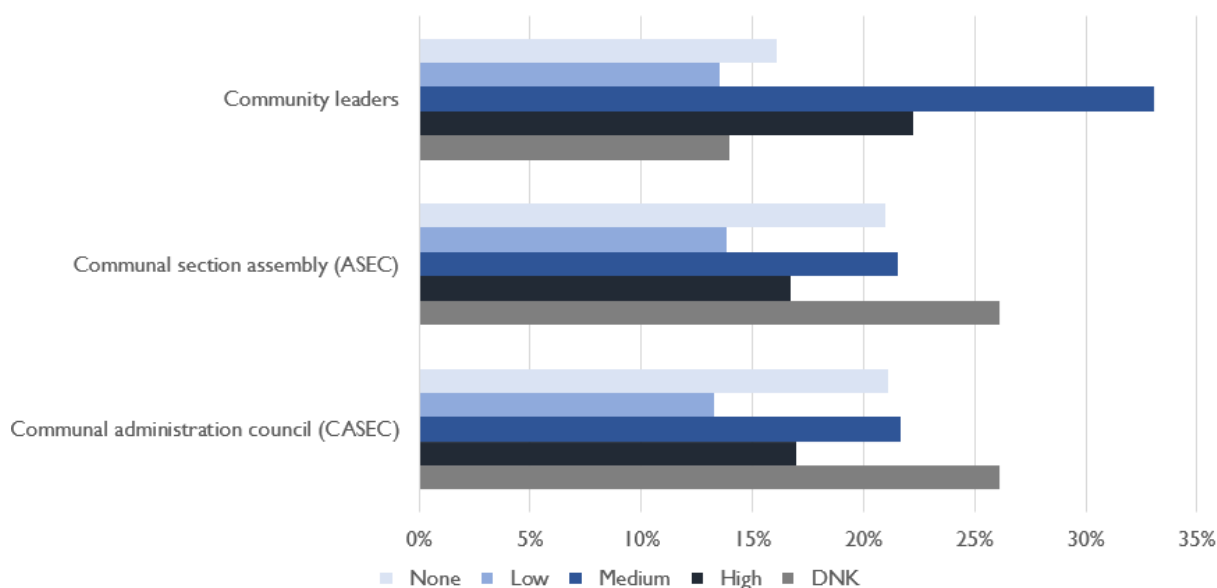
Despite growing violence, a large majority of Haitians report that they are satisfied living in their neighborhood. The CSA survey found that 11 percent were very dissatisfied, 7 percent were somewhat dissatisfied, 5 percent were neutral, 38 percent were somewhat satisfied, and 39 percent were very satisfied. However, respondents in the Ouest department were 7 percentage points more likely to be very or somewhat dissatisfied with their neighborhood than respondents in the rest of the country; respondents in Artibonite were the second-most dissatisfied. The majority of respondents reported they were not concerned about changes in their neighborhoods, because they did not perceive their neighborhoods as changing.

The CSA survey also asked respondents whether their neighborhood had changed in the last 12 months: 4 percent said that their neighborhood had gotten much worse, 22 percent said it had gotten worse, 64 percent said it had remained the same, and 7 percent said it had improved. However, the national average masks some notable differences across departments – 35 percent of Ouest-based respondents reported their neighborhood had gotten worse or much worse, which is nearly 16 percentage points

higher than the rest of the country. Artibonite was again second to Ouest in reported worsening of neighborhoods.

Additionally, low community support has reduced trust in GOH and security organizations that were designed to meet community needs. As shown in *Figure 21*, the CSA survey found mixed trust in these institutions, with a large percentage of respondents indicating no or low trust. Trust was mixed with regard to the ability of communal section assemblies and communal administration councils to effectively deal with the problems respondents faced. Community leaders have the highest reported level of trust. *Figure 21* does not include the levels of trust in the HNP, which is mixed, as discussed.

Figure 21: Trust in certain types of actors important to local governance and community support



RESILIENCE FACTORS IDENTIFIED THROUGH CSA RESPONSES

Haitians have suffered from vulnerability factors throughout much of the country’s history, while adapting through means such as working in the informal sector, helping out neighbors in distress, and tolerating a certain degree of poverty, petty criminality, and violence. However, the current level of violence is challenging traditional coping strategies, and gang involvement becomes a natural extension.

In the face of gangs and the absence of capable police, some Haitians are taking new measures to protect themselves from violence. Resilience measures CSA respondents highlighted included modification of daily habits and activities, as well as burning tires or similar items to create light at night. As previously noted in *Figure 6*, between 15 and 35 percent of survey respondents have changed their habits and activities due to security, such as allowing children to play outside, seeking recreation and taking walks, leaving home alone, and leaving home at night. The survey also found that 13 percent of parents have changed their children’s schools in response to violence.

Some young people find opportunities to help their communities, even during periods of violence. A young man from Les Cayes noted that there were increased opportunities to become a leader in his community. The massive increase in violence has forced many families to leave their neighborhoods and seek safer environments. Tens of thousands of people have been internally displaced by gangs and others have left the country. A CSO director observed that many Haitians did not believe in their country’s future: “They don’t believe that there is a future for Haiti. They move to the Dominican Republic. They

do not invest in their country. Their future is elsewhere, where there is a better life. The people that have the means are always leaving.”

Assessment Question: What community policing and conflict resolution mechanisms exist in communities?

As previously noted, the HNP is aware of community policing methods, but has limited capacity to apply them due to inability to access the most violence-affected neighborhoods, limited community support, and lack of resources. Corruption and collaboration with gangs further undermine community policing efforts. Conflict resolution mechanisms exist, including mediation and reconciliation programs, and are developed largely through CSOs. However, conflict resolution activities are seriously affected by the rapidly declining security context.

COMMUNITY POLICING: Globally, community policing is particularly relevant to gang reduction at two levels: first, at the causative level, because it addresses the social and economic conditions that contribute to the growth of gangs; and second, at the relational level, because it addresses the relationships that develop between gangs and the communities they control or claim to protect. Often, in places where community policing methods are not in use, community members are alienated by the behavior and attitudes of the few police officers they know. These relationships make anti-gang actions more difficult and costly in terms of lives and resources.⁸⁷

However, community policing programs in Haiti, such as a 2014 program that drew on the experiences of Haitian–American officers from the New York Police Department, were not sustainable. The program did not build on Haiti’s existing police culture, structure, and operations. Haiti’s lack of trust in GOH institutions and fear of the implications of collaborating with the HNP made employing community policing methods difficult. Haitians, especially those in Port-au-Prince, are well aware that some HNP officers are affiliated or collaborate with gangs, and that active participation with the HNP could be noticed by gang actors and the consequences for them could be grave. A citizen security expert further explained, “Communities see the shift in the HNP stance and the rise of power of gangs. When they see the HNP fearing gangs and gang leaders walking free, the message is clear about who is in charge.”

Through interviews with relevant actors, the assessment team found that the HNP were aware of community policing methods, had been trained in the approach, and were interested in using it in certain locations. However, the urgent need to contain violence has prevented them from using these tactics in recent years. The citizen security expert complained that “the places that need community policing the most are the ones not getting it, and there was never any political interest to do it. During the time of MINUSTAH, the HNP did try to talk to the population, but it often felt like public relations events.” One HNP officer recognized the importance of the “social aspect” of policy work, which was becoming harder as the violence situation further deteriorated: “Trying to keep good relations between us (the police) and the population, and trying to solve issues without conflict. [...] Poor neighborhoods are not easy environments for the police. It depends on your personal relationship with the community there. If you are from there, you understand so you can act accordingly.” Other officers mentioned that they had been trained on community policing and they participated in community recreational and educational activities to maintain positive relationships with community members and gain access to information.

⁸⁷ Katz, Charles M. and Vincent J. Webb. 2006. “Policing Gangs in America.” Cambridge University Press..

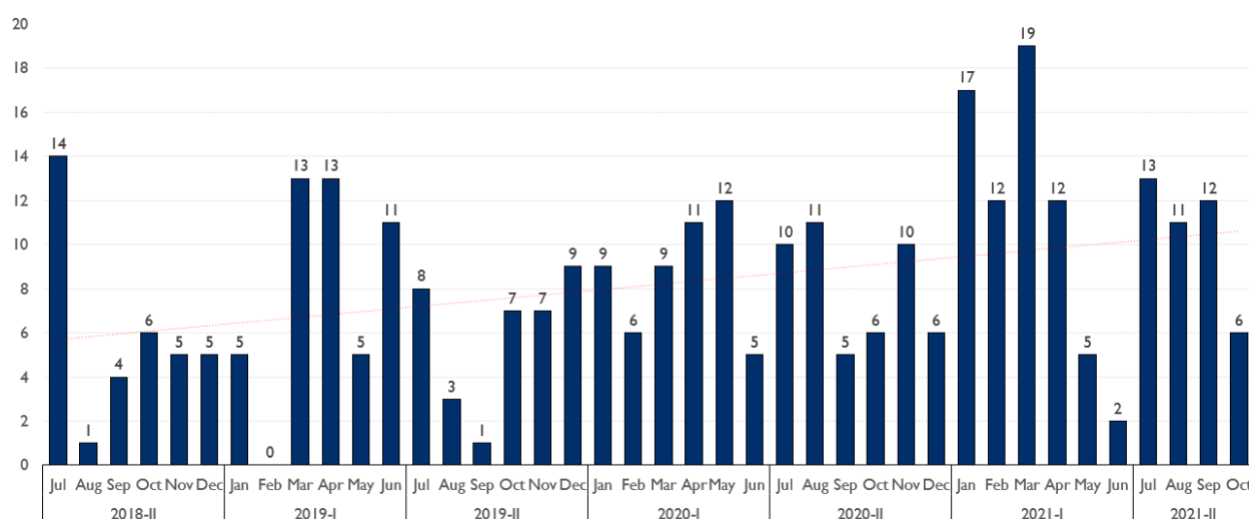
However, another police officer said that there was no community policing in Haiti now: “When we talk about the poor neighborhoods, we see that these areas are almost back to being areas without any rights. There are currently no community police. There is no real relationship between the public and the police. It is now a matter of repression. Because now, there are many armed people in the poor neighborhoods.” A community leader also noted that not only was there no community policing, but the police presence was decreasing or nonexistent in some neighborhoods, or the police had lost their credibility by sharing information with gangs. In addition, one young man in Les Cayes described the police presence in his neighborhood as insufficient to give a sense of security: “They just make friends, they come to party, and have sex. But they don’t come to work. But they are still in uniform, in their police vehicle. They just come and go dressed as police but not in the sense of giving security.”

CONFLICT RESOLUTION: Donors have trained CSOs on nonviolent conflict resolution by adapting lessons learned and best practices from similar efforts in fragile states. Such efforts include people-to-people reconciliation programs and activities that bring together individuals of different backgrounds. Some Haitian CSOs have used these techniques to prevent, mediate, and resolve election-related conflicts and land and family disputes. However, based on responses from community leaders and CSOs, it appears that conflict resolution is becoming increasingly challenging; one community leader noted: “Such activities have become much more difficult after the gang war in Martissant, the decision by the HNP and many people to leave the area. I am trying to understand the perspectives of the gang leaders who control the area to develop appropriate conflict resolution activities.”

According to KIs and FGDs, in gang-controlled areas, some CSOs negotiate agreements with gangs to limit the gangs’ interference with their work. Some of these negotiations require the participation of multiple parties, including multiple gangs, and sometimes also the GOH and the HNP. These agreements are subject to changes in gang leadership and the takeover of territories by other gangs.

Community members turn to the police, courts, or gangs if they cannot resolve problems by themselves or with the help of other organizations. Residents often call upon gangs to mediate disputes among residents or between residents and gang members, using either violent or non-violent mechanisms. If none of these efforts are successful or possible, some Haitians turn to vengeance techniques such as lynching accused perpetrators of crime. The HNP recorded 109 cases of lynching between July 2018 and October 2021, as shown in Figure 22.

Figure 22: Reported cases of lynching in Haiti, 2018–2021



Assessment Question: What is the role of religious leaders, if any, in dealing with violence and gangs?

Religious leaders in Haiti have important community roles, and some are involved in supporting gang exits and conflict resolution. However, the rising insecurity threatens religious institutions within the communities, as well as the leaders who operate them. Religious leaders are not immune to the violence affecting the communities they work in and have also been targeted.

Around the world, religious leaders have contributed to conflict resolution and mitigation by providing leadership, convening stakeholders, and delivering services in times of need. Adversaries often consider them to be more legitimate than governmental authorities due to moral commitments and connection with broader civil society. Regional evidence also shows that religious leaders can help youth leave gangs. A 2019 USAID survey in Honduras found that religion (particularly belonging to an Evangelical church) played a critical role in the process of safely leaving the gang.⁸⁸

The assessment team found that some religious leaders were making efforts to stop violence in gang-controlled areas, but not all of these efforts were successful. An international citizen security expert mentioned that churches tried but failed to negotiate with gangs to improve security: “A few weeks ago, there were some Protestant churches that were trying to negotiate something with the gangs. And clearly it didn’t work, but there was an attempt to have some sort of [a] conversation about what could be done so the gangs would leave the violence and participate. But the gangs weren’t interested. They just wanted money.” Another respondent said that there was a Catholic Church leader who was believed to have negotiated a period of peace with the gangs: “His church is the only Catholic church that has not been attacked.”

One religious leader talked about his efforts to meet with gang leaders over time. He said that previously, he had worked with 15 to 16 different leaders, but now, he was only able to work with the top three. For example, one tactic is that he arranged with gang leaders to allow a bus to pick up students in areas they controlled, although this recently resulted in failure because one bus was shot. Another religious leader was able to convene GOH and security organizations, identifying lower-risk opportunities for the population to provide information to the police on gangs and violence.

However, these efforts have not been successful nationwide. A religious leader in Martissant told the assessment team that all the churches in his neighborhood were closed due to insecurity and gang violence, and that he was unable to lead mass at his own church because the area was affected by shootings. Additionally, religious leaders themselves are not safe from harm; another religious leader shared that a pastor was killed after withdrawing cash from a bank.

CIVIL SOCIETY

As detailed in this section, violence is a widely dispersed phenomenon that cannot be addressed comprehensively by civil society working alone. In other countries, civil society has worked with families to encourage youth to leave gangs, thereby mitigating select violence. However, the assessment team found that this approach has not shown success in effectively eliminating gang violence from neighborhoods or regions in Haiti and will require greater support from the GOH.

⁸⁸ USAID. 2019. “A Study of Gang Disengagement in Honduras: Key Takeaways.” Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://lacc.fiu.edu/research/the-new-faces-of-street-gangs-in-central-america/summary-gang-honduras.pdf>.

In Haiti, CSOs have worked in gang-controlled slums for several years to administer social service and conflict-reduction initiatives. However, many CSOs, even those working on mediation and with gangs, find that the space has closed in the past year. Interviews with citizen security experts and donors reinforced the view that CSOs play a limited role in reducing recent violence. The assessment team concluded that while CSOs have worked effectively in many Haitian neighborhoods affected by gang violence, they can do little in neighborhoods most severely affected by violence (and those where the GOH cannot play its intended role).

However, in the absence of state authority, the assessment team established that Haitians have created and expanded a number of organizations that provide consultative and participatory mechanisms to address the needs of the population. Haiti has a tradition of youth activism, which has inspired many youths to work for social justice alone or with community-based organizations.

Finally, sectoral assessments and program evaluations have demonstrated that both donor and civil society initiatives have minimal impact on violence reduction given Haiti's corrupt political economy. Ultimately, the long-term impact of these efforts depends on reducing elite control of political institutions and increasing government funding.

Assessment Question: What evidence, if any, exists to indicate that civic engagement affects violence and gang involvement?

Only limited evidence was identified to show that civic engagement positively affects violence and gang involvement, and more research should be conducted on the subject in Haiti. However, CSOs continue to do their best to remain active in preventing gang membership and violence. They are also maintaining pressure on the state to address insecurity and preserve human rights, although interviewees suggest that more could be done.

Research is sparse on how donors, NGOs, and the GOH interact with gangs to access communities in need. However, select findings are principally noted above in the "Impact of Gangs on Community Development Programs" subsection. More research should be conducted on viable strategies that reach vulnerable groups while avoiding legitimizing and materially supporting gangs. Some research has found that exiting gang members require intensive social support and services to find new employment and social networks. For example, in the United States, there have been successful efforts to engage former gang members in programs using a public health approach to discourage violence and encourage other gang members to leave.⁸⁹ CSOs are not only essential in preventing gang membership and encouraging exit, but also to serve as an institution in communities where gangs have undermined the GOH's legitimacy. They are, therefore, necessary to build community strength from the bottom up and encourage cooperation with entities such as the HNP. USAID has initiated similar projects that reduce violence by strengthening communities in Central America and the Caribbean.⁹⁰

In Haiti, CSOs have worked in gang-controlled slums for several years to administer social service and conflict-reduction programs with relatively little interference from gangs. Other CSOs have worked with communities, regional governments, and the GOH to develop policies and programs to prevent the

⁸⁹ Everytown for Gun Safety. 2020. "Community-led Public Safety Strategies." (October 15). Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://everytownresearch.org/report/community-led-public-safety-strategies/>.

⁹⁰ Rupert, Evelyn. 2019. "Adapting and Adopting Evidence-Based Programming to Prevent Violence." Creative Associates International. (May 16). Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://www.creativeassociatesinternational.com/stories/adapting-and-adopting-evidence-based-programming-to-prevent-violence/>.

spread and growth of gangs and to effectively deal with gang-associated violence. For example, many CSOs have partnered with governments on conflict prevention and mitigation programs. However, as of 2022, the violence is too severe for most of them to continue previous activities; responses from citizen security experts and donor officials indicate that CSOs have played a limited role in reducing recent gang violence. Such responses suggest that CSOs should take a stance in pressuring officials to prevent and combat violence.

In addition, one donor official criticized the inclusivity of Haitian civil society approaches: “Groups like the Commission⁹¹ that sponsored the Montana Accord have been trying, but they have been talking mostly to other Haitians who are just like themselves. The conversation needs to be broader and incorporate more diversity. Within Haitian politics and civil society, you have lots of people talking to people who are just like themselves. Appeals and actions need to incorporate more people and points of view.” This critique also speaks to the importance of raising awareness throughout the broader geographic population beyond Port-au-Prince.

Assessment Question: What role do civil society and civic engagement and participation play in violence and gangs?

As previously mentioned, some CSOs and community organizations continue to work in gang-controlled areas with some modifications, including a more limited scope or a greater need to negotiate with gangs for access and safe operations. However, many CSOs, even those used to work on mediation and with gangs, find that the space is closing and efficiency is declining due to the many challenges. Despite gaining trust among community members, CSOs by and large have been unable to prevent the recent increase in violence.

Even though the GOH provides few legal provisions that facilitate Haitian CSO activities, these organizations are resourceful and have experience in providing a range of citizen security services. The assessment team’s mapping of CSOs found that services ranged from crime prevention activities, workforce and employment creation, neighborhood social programs, parenting programs to reduce child abuse and gender-based violence, martial arts for vulnerable citizens, rehabilitation of ex-prisoners, trust-building, and community policing.

CSO ACTIVITY IN GANG-CONTROLLED AREAS: As previously mentioned, a range of interviews found that CSOs and community organizations continued to work in gang-controlled areas with some modifications in scope. Unfortunately, some CSOs and community-based organizations that had previously invested in conflict resolution were shocked by how quickly the violence escalated out of control, and they question whether their investments were worthwhile. CSOs that continue to operate often have to enter into agreements with gangs to work in these locations, complicating efforts to combat gangs according to one citizen security expert. In some cases, CSOs have moved their operations to areas that are less affected by violence. One Martissant *baz* leader mentioned that CSO activities focusing on road maintenance and training had halted in his neighborhood, but would restart if violence subdued. Other CSOs have committed to working in gang-controlled areas with areas of focus such as violence against women and children, entrepreneurship, citizen and youth engagement, and library development; however, many of these activities are currently on hold.

⁹¹ The Commission refers to the *Commission for the Search for a Haitian Solution to the Crisis*, a coalition of CSOs that sponsored the 2021 Montana Accord, which laid out a roadmap for addressing Haiti’s political crisis.

CSO activities touch the lives of gang members, their families, and residents of communities in neighborhoods controlled by gangs. Despite gaining trust among community members, they have been unable to prevent the recent increase in violence. A citizen security expert told the assessment team that Haiti was experiencing a different, more violent level of militancy; he also said that citizens who engaged with gangs were likely to be killed. However, he believed that residents could get involved in discussions with gang members, especially where they exercised effective control of the neighborhood.

Recent history highlights the potential for increased violence when CSOs take the wrong approach to operating in gang-controlled areas. In January 2010, many of the Port-au-Prince residents who were the most affected by the earthquake were located in neighborhoods where armed gangs were strongly present. Many NGOs delivering relief interventions were not familiar with the social and security paradigms in these communities, so they bribed or hired gang leaders to provide services such as security, interpretation, and logistical support for their staff when carrying out projects. Some of these NGOs made the mistake of entering districts with armed groups or pseudo-community leaders and unwittingly sidelined community leaders, which reversed progress that had been made by MINUSTAH in many neighborhoods. At the same time, thousands of criminals had escaped from prisons that were destroyed during the earthquake, which also undid much of MINUSTAH's modest progress in reducing crime and violence. The combination of escaped gang leaders fighting to regain control over their former turf, competition between gangs for control of relief resources, internal upstarts vying for gang leadership, and the large-scale influx of recovery assistance by NGOs unfamiliar with Haiti's realities made the post-earthquake environment especially conducive to poor gang engagement practices and a post-earthquake rise in violence.⁹²

Assessment Question: What options exist for youth to be civically engaged?

In areas less affected by violence, youth typically have options to engage with their community through recreation, although widespread kidnappings have complicated such efforts. Some youths reported having organized and led community activities even in more difficult neighborhoods, such as community cleanup. However, this scenario was not deemed possible in some of the other gang- and violence-affected neighborhoods. Youth also lamented the progressive disappearance of many CSO-organized activities and opportunities for youth engagement. Nonetheless, a significant number of youths in our study appear hopeful that community engagement can resume over time.

One option is to play sports; for example, a CSO sponsored sports activities in the Cité Soleil area of Port-au-Prince for more than 20 years in recognition of the potential to mitigate conflict and gang recruitment, attracting hundreds of youths. However, increased gang violence has put the program in jeopardy and according to program leadership, participation halved. Other options, as indicated by FGD responses in Les Cayes and Martissant, include neighborhood cleanup and recreation such as dance.

FGD responses reflect mixed views on potential for youth engagement in the current crisis. One FGD among Martissant youth discussed participation in community and CSO initiatives with a sense of hope that further engagement was possible once violence decreased. However, other responses from Croix-des-Bouquets and Delmas indicated that fear of gangs and levels of extreme violence hindered willingness to participate in activities. Female participants in Martissant FGDs discussed their previous participation in CSO-organized activities, with one woman speaking nostalgically of the many opportunities for youth to be engaged in their community that had disappeared because of the violence:

⁹² Kirsch et al. 2012.

“Before, when you came to the area, you felt like you had arrived somewhere special. We even named it Hollywood, Ville des Lumières, because the place was so beautiful. But now it’s so dark. There are not even any people.” However, another female participant had continued hope in the future of community engagement. Another respondent highlighted the potential for youth to use social media as a tool to leverage GOH support and accountability.

Assessment Question: What consultation and participation mechanisms are available for citizens?

In the absence or near-absence of state authority, Haitians have created a number of organizations that provide participatory mechanisms to address the population’s needs. These organizations often touch on various aspects of insecurity as it has come to affect nearly all facets of life for many Haitians. These groups scrounge for funding and rely heavily on themselves. Consultation with and participation in local government remains difficult in Haiti, because local government lacks autonomy and funding, and decentralization has politically never been advanced.

Separate although complementary to this assessment, USAID/Haiti requested LACLEARN to complete a mapping of Haitian civil society actors in the citizen security space.⁹³ The analysis categorized organizations by capacity and sub-sector, the latter including: primary crime prevention; secondary crime prevention; tertiary crime prevention; community-driven policing; social crime prevention; local urban governance; medical emergency response; victim counseling; gang membership reduction; domestic violence; conflict resolution; positive youth development; and social risk factor reduction.

Beyond these organizations are political parties, human rights organizations, religious groups, and broad citizen movements focused on public policy. Sometimes, these groups come together to address specific policy issues; at other times, they have formed commissions to address the political future. In August 2021, the *Commission for the Search for a Haitian Solution to the Crisis* brought together about 200 CSOs to issue the Montana Accord, which lays out a framework for reestablishing government authority and legitimacy after the assassination of President Moïse. Separate from the Montana Accord, a CSO leader said that there were numerous other citizen-driven groups that pondered Haiti’s future: “Entrepreneurs who I had never known to be engaged – started an innovative process under *Kafou Lespwa*, collectively developing scenarios for the country that might be viable. Among them was scenario *Soley Leve* – talking about the reconstruction of the state, establishing good public politics, training and creating awareness in the general public of [good governance].”

Despite these bright spots, the assessment team found that local governments at local levels were underfunded, had limited autonomy and authority, and typically provided few opportunities for residents’ engagement. However, donor support to several local governments, such as through USAID’s LOKAL+, has created opportunities for citizens to communicate through public hearings.

Assessment Question: Are there significant youth social or political movements? If so, what is their stance on and role in gangs and violence?

Haiti has a tradition of youth activism, as exemplified by *Nou Pap Dòmi* (“We Do Not Sleep”), an activist group dedicated to the transformation of political culture. They have organized a campaign against insecurity, condemning politicians and businesspeople who provided funding and weapons to

⁹³ Please contact the designated LACLEARN point of contact for access to this internal USAID report completed in early 2022.

gangs. However, the phenomenon of “rent-a-mob,” where politicians or businessmen (sometimes with the help of gangs) organize mobs for their own purpose, hurts public protests as an act.

Nou Pap Dòmi organized massive street protests against the corruption of PetroCaribe funds documented by the High Court of Accounts in 2019. Throughout the fall of 2019, demonstrators blocked the streets of Port-au-Prince and regional towns for several days a week. This general strike led to the closure of schools, government offices, and many businesses. In June 2021, before the assassination of President Moïse, *Nou Pap Dòmi* campaigned against the constitutional referendum, based on the group’s belief that the new constitution would give impunity to those involved in corruption and human rights abuses. They also organized a campaign against insecurity, condemning politicians and businesspeople who provided funding and weapons to gangs.

Nou Pap Dòmi is open to a wide variety of Haitians. In an April 2021 interview, a group’s spokesperson said: “It is really important to emphasize the collective’s plurality. Many young and less young people met and discovered they had the same vision for the country, even though their political ideologies were not the same. Some are leftists. Some are center left. Others are still searching. The collective allowed us to learn about Haitian citizens and to work in groups.”⁹⁴ However, members of *Nou Pap Dòmi* fear that more established organizations could supplant the youth movement to maintain elite political control.

Assessment Question: Under what circumstances have CSOs been able to contribute significantly to mitigating violence in communities?

At the project level, claims of achieving a sustainable impact on the mitigation or reduction of violence are typically unsubstantiated. At the department and national levels, the links between public policy, social service funding, and violence levels have not been established. Multiple sectoral assessments and program evaluations have shown that both donor and civil society initiatives have a minimal impact on violence reduction given Haiti’s corrupt political economy. Ultimately, whether civil society efforts contribute to violence mitigation in the long-term depends on reducing elite control of political institutions and sustainably increasing government funding.

Measuring the success of movements in mitigating violence is challenging. However, there are other ways to measure CSO results, such as changes in government policy, funding levels, and program outcomes, but these outcomes are below the level of changes in the degrees of violence. Ultimately, whether civil society efforts contribute to violence mitigation in the long term depends on reducing elite control of political institutions and sustainably increasing government funding.

Civil society’s efforts to mitigate violence are integrally linked with its efforts to fight corruption and establish rule of law. Currently, activists believe that elite and foreign dominance of the political system make the effective administration of justice impossible, as seen in a statement from a group of diaspora activists directed at the new UN Mission in 2017: “One cannot pretend to ‘reinforce’ the rule of law when the state, by its nature and orientation, exists only to defend without compromise the interests of the dominant class and of a certain political class. One cannot institute a ‘practice’ of justice in state institutions to benefit the majority, when that state is subservient to the interests of foreign powers and of a subcontracting oligarchy.”⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Beltis, James and Véline Charlier. 2021. “Fighting for Survival, Building for Power.” North American Congress on Latin America. (April 16). Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://nacla.org/news/haiti-petrochallengers-nou-pap-domi-corruption>.

⁹⁵ AlterPresse. 2017. “Haïti: La Minujusth, l’autre visage de l’occupation.” Available [here](#).

Haitian CSOs work hard to promote fair and equitable access to justice for Haitians. The 2018–2022 campaigns of *Nou Pap Dòmi* against corruption and insecurity and the Montana Accord of the *Commission for the Search for a Haitian Solution* follow in the tradition of previous civil society groups and movements.⁹⁶ They build on the work of CSOs and international NGOs targeting neighborhoods affected by gangs and violence. However, their resources are limited and the incentives for decision-makers are stacked against them, so they are generally unable to reverse the alarming levels of malpractice in the justice system.

POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE

As detailed in this section, Haiti’s governance system appears to be captured by elites, hindering its ability to effectively serve citizens and address insecurity. Evidence suggests that many Haitians believe politics and governance (along with poverty) are the major forces promoting insecurity in the country.

There are minimal checks on the executive branch in line with weak implementation of the Constitution. Promises of departmental decentralization have not become a reality, despite local underfunding. As a result, the dependence of local governments on the GOH has harmed government’s effectiveness and promoted patronage politics. Furthermore, the influence of a wealthy elite has led to a regressive tax structure with a minimal tax burden on big businesses and the rich.

The GOH is thereby starved for funds for essential state services, notably those required for security and justice. Haiti has entered a period of political chaos, characterized by the absence of the most important state institutions, including the lack of a functioning legislature over the past two years. In this context, some politicians, businesses, and gangs have created partnerships that advance their objectives at the expense of citizen security (as previously detailed). The current state of the GOH makes holding legitimate elections an unlikely prospect in the near term. Additionally, the assessment team found that gangs sought to replace governance gaps by providing services and goods to citizens, although the success of these efforts among communities was mixed.

Assessment Question: What roles do political competition and instability play in insecurity and violence?

The governance system in place is captured by elites, offers minimal checks on the executive branch due to weak implementation of the 1987 Constitution, and has not had a functioning legislature for about two years. There is also no Constitutional Council, which means there are no judges to assess conflicts between state institutions or to interpret the constitution. Low turnout in elections means that political actors do not have popular mandates. Yet, some political actors in power have acted as they please and have been shielded from prosecution or accountability for alleged crimes or malfeasance while in office. Holding political office is, therefore, seen as a prize worth fighting for, and gangs have been and remain a critical tool politicians use to get the votes they need and obtain leverage over the government, society, and other politicians. Connections between politicians and gangs are well established, including in the context of extreme acts of violence and kidnappings. However, this pattern of behavior could backfire, because recent events suggest that some gang leaders may now be harboring their own political ambitions.

⁹⁶ When President Jean-Claude Duvalier left the country at the beginning of 1986, his downfall was marked by a popular movement called *dechoukaj* (uprooting) that targeted his supporters and those who benefited materially, socially, and politically from their association with him. Although not formally defined or directed, anti-corruption was at the root of *dechoukaj*. The movement sought to do away with privileged access to economic, social, and political power and to replace it with a more equitable political economy.

HISTORICAL CHALLENGES: Between 1986 and 2006, Haiti experienced 25 changes of government and two military interventions. As a result, transitional governments lacked the mandate or the time to accomplish reforms or address violence. In addition, weak implementation of the 1987 Constitution resulted in minimal checks on the executive branch. The parliament, which has shut down multiple times, lacks the capacity to provide oversight over the executive branch and allows attacks on the judiciary's independence. Capture of the executive branch by the elite and poor budgetary skills have also resulted in abysmally low funding for basic governmental services. Additionally, the promise of decentralization has not become a reality in Haiti, so underfunded, centrally controlled local governments remain the norm.

President Jovenel Moïse took office in 2017 and was assassinated in July 2021, which led the country further into an extra-constitutional governance structure. His assassination plunged Haiti deeper into a political crisis. The parliament is inoperative because the mandate of all deputies had expired in 2019, and only 10 senators remained in office in February 2022, which is not enough for a quorum. As of April 2022, Haiti had no president, no parliament, and a dysfunctional Supreme Court. The prime minister⁹⁷ has ruled by decree, accompanied by increased crime, economic decline, weakened support for democratic institutions and processes, and erosion of the rule of law.

ROLE OF POLITICAL COMPETITION AND INSTABILITY: One donor official identified politics as the principal root cause of violence and insecurity: "The concerns about poverty are there, but the principal causes are political. "Rent-a-mob" is a practice traditionally used by political actors. Gangs have existed for a while. Duvalier and Tonton Macoutes and Aristide and his *chimères* used organized groups to do their bidding during and between elections. In March and April, the government paid [the gang coalition] G9 for a while to stop kidnapping. Political interests fuel the violence." According to another international citizen security expert, the current violence and political crisis have created a power vacuum, which exacerbates preexisting social ills.

One interviewee claimed that the political and social crisis came from the breakdown of governmental and other societal institutions: "The situation worsened because the state was already in crisis. There was no appointed leader of the executive power, no parliament, and a weak judicial sector [...] That is why everyone thinks that the crisis is first and foremost political, and that the solution will come with getting a new president into office. The state is unable to reestablish order. Key institutions in society, such as the family, the schools and the church, are all in disarray." Meanwhile, politicians are able to take advantage of this "cultural shock" by supporting gangs and profiting.

The CSA survey provided important insights into the political linkages of gangs. Most respondents (62 percent) disagreed or strongly disagreed that gangs had political connections they used to help their neighborhood, or that gangs protected the political interests of people in their neighborhood (65 percent). For both questions, less than 10 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed.⁹⁸

Many interview participants spoke of politicians' involvement with gangs, including a GOH official who noted that "[Politicians] encourage and even participate in instigating violence, especially during electoral periods. The head of the 400 Mawozo gang said that he worked with senators, met regularly with them

⁹⁷ In July 2021, Ariel Henry became the prime minister. Henry stayed in office past the February 2022 date that would have ended President Moïse's mandate because elections originally set for October 2019 were not yet scheduled as of April 2022, perhaps because he dismissed the Electoral Council members in September 2021.

⁹⁸ These statistics exclude the approximately 76 percent of all respondents who answered, "not applicable," which was the answer choice for those who did not report exposure to gang activity.

in their offices, and even mentioned their names. Without insecurity in Martissant, Grand Ravine and elsewhere, politicians who lack political support have no chance of staying in power.” The leader of 400 Mawozo is not the first or the last gang leader to report recurring contacts and dealings with politicians. As previously mentioned, the leader of the “Five-Second Gang” made important revelations while appearing in front of a judge about the members of the state, the opposition, and the private sector who facilitated his criminal operations.

ELECTORAL IMPLICATIONS: There are also electoral implications for the linkages between gangs and politicians. One local citizen security specialist told the assessment team, “The gang is a political instrument because many public institutions and politicians are in contact with them and use them for electoral purposes.” A community leader concurred, affirming that political candidates, particularly from heavily populated areas of Port-au-Prince, used gangs to pressure voters in their constituencies. This interpretation meshes well with the La Saline massacre and the dramatic G9-linked gang attacks in the neighborhoods of Chancerelles, Cite Soleil, Fort-Dimanche, La Saline, Pont-Rouge, and Tokyo in May 2020. Each neighborhood was well-known to be disenfranchised and opposition neighborhoods. However, this tactic might be less useful today, because violence pushed many residents of gang-controlled areas to move elsewhere. Additionally, a human rights organization leader questioned the ability of the government to hold free and fair elections during such a violent period: “The security issue must be resolved before elections happen. Is it possible to have an electoral campaign in places like Martissant, Marche Boursale, even in the Grand Anse? No, it is not possible.”

Assessment Question: How do high-level corruption networks contribute to insecurity and gang activity?

The assessment team found that high-level corruption networks had played an important role in recent insecurity, particularly due to private sector’s and political connections with gangs to access protection, territorial control, and political patronage. In return for providing gangs with funds, weapons, and political cover, politicians can use gangs to maintain support and gain votes from neighborhoods under gang control. While GOH oversight mechanisms do exist in theory, they lack resources and autonomy and must rely on the justice system to convict corrupt actors.

Widespread weakness of the GOH has enabled corruption among consecutive governments; this includes both grand corruption at high levels and petty corruption among low-level civil servants and police. Through KIs and FGDs, the assessment team found that high-level corruption networks had played an important role in recent insecurity, particularly due to private sector’s and political connections with gangs to access protection, territorial control, and political patronage.

While some high-level corruption involves politicians and private-sector elite, others have partnered with criminal organizations and gangs involved in drug trafficking. According to private sector actors, corrupt businesses use gangs to import illegal goods from the Dominican Republic and elsewhere. High profile Haitian politicians have also been personally involved or close to persons involved in criminal and illicit activities, including the drug trade. Additionally, some politicians and criminal organizations are believed to have encouraged the enormous increase in kidnappings by gangs in return for gaining a share of the ransom payments, according to one donor official, who said that “kidnapping used to be only to make money, but now there’s a social political element to some of it.”

GOH OVERSIGHT: The assessment team found that the GOH bodies that investigate corruption, such as the Anti-Corruption Unit of the Ministry of Finance, lacked resources and autonomy and must rely on the justice system to convict corrupt actors. Such convictions are rare due to a lack of judicial

independence, an excruciatingly slow judicial process, and corruption within the courts. In Addition, there is limited oversight of political party and campaign financing, which allows for politicians to build local patron status and dispense favors, according to one donor official. One human rights organization leader criticized the international community for facilitating corruption and impunity: “All national and international efforts to reform the justice system have avoided addressing concretely the issue of corruption. For the last 11 years, the [Haitian Tèt Kale Party] has systematically dismantled all accountability mechanisms,” the organization leader continued.

Many respondents pointed to the PetroCaribe scandal as clearly demonstrating the lack of government’s capacity and interest to address high-level corruption. PetroCaribe was an initiative by the Venezuelan government to offer subsidized fuel loans to Caribbean nations. Reports from 2017 and 2019 listed numerous current and former GOH officials and prominent private-sector contractors engaging in fraudulent disbursement of public funds, overbilling, collusion, favoritism, and embezzlement.⁹⁹ The scandal surrounding this program has been the subject of high levels of public and international scrutiny and the focal point for a substantial protest movement.

Assessment Question: To what extent do gangs and criminal organizations fill “governance gaps” of institutional weakness and poor provision of services?

GOH agencies at the national and local levels lack the funds, organization, and will to provide quality goods and services to Haitians. This is even more true in neighborhoods where gangs exercise total control, because GOH entities cannot realistically enter even if they wanted to. In this context, gangs do sometimes provide services to communities under their control, ranging from food, water, some form of protection, and sometimes help with specific needs (e.g., schooling). The extent and success of these efforts to fill gaps in government services is difficult to assess but appears insufficient to compensate for the damage done to the residents’ lives and communities by gang violence.

In fragile states, gangs and criminal organizations generally tend to fall into one or more of three broad categories: (1) a social role as crime-control vigilantes or service-providing benefactors filling a void that national service providers cannot filled; (2) a political role as distributors of patronage into popular neighborhoods in exchange for their political support for a political movement; or (3) a criminal role as criminal or delinquent actors involved in illicit activities. Haiti is no exception, because its gangs and criminal organizations fall into all three of these categories.

GOH agencies lack the funds, organization, and will to provide quality goods and services to the Haitian population. A variety of respondents, including GOH officials, entrepreneurs, private-sector leaders, and FGD participants in Les Cayes and Martissant, agreed that gangs could provide government functions in areas the government does not control. One GOH official elaborated on this point, stating: “The state abandons people in poor neighborhoods – no education, water, electricity, etc. They are under the total control of the bandits, who give them certain services.” He also noted that the absence or provision of poor government services helped gangs to recruit, and that better government services discouraged young people from joining.

In neighborhoods where gangs exercise total control, it is extremely difficult for GOH entities to play their role because gangs block roads, which halts the transportation of goods and official travel. As

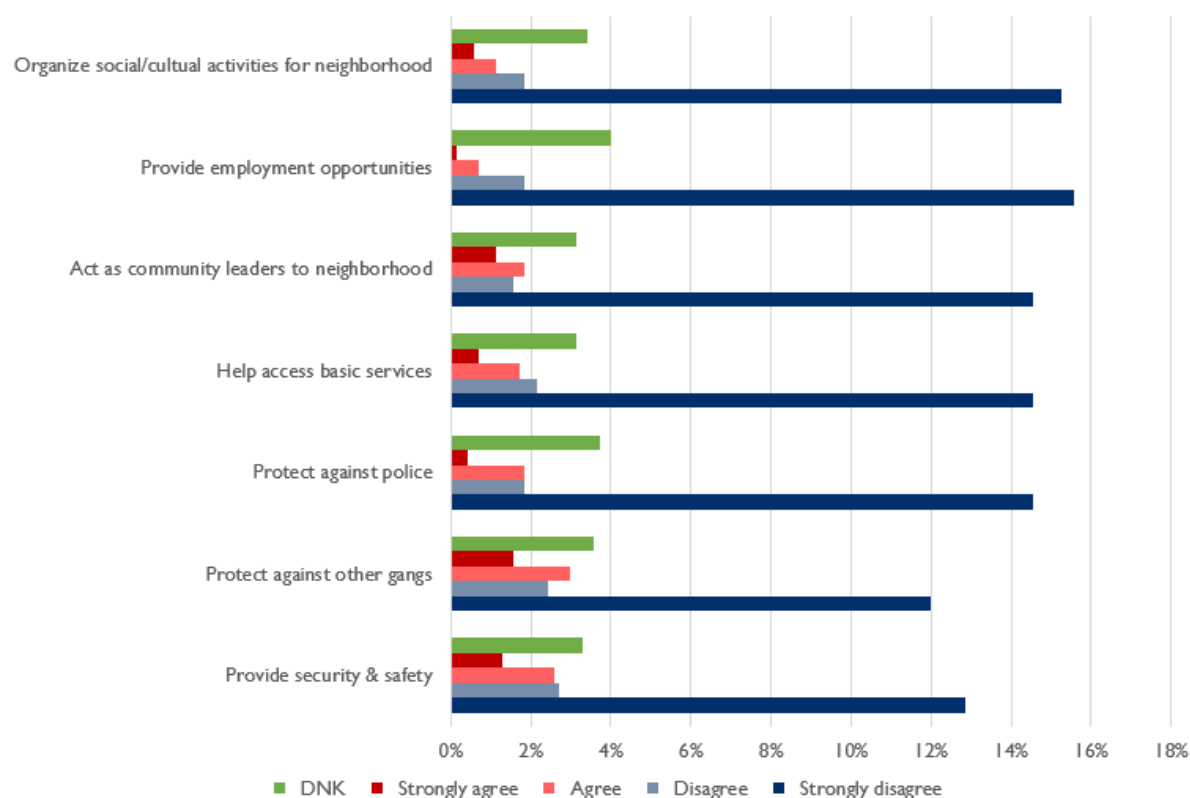
⁹⁹ Hague, Wench Iren. 2018. “Haiti: A Political Economy Analysis.” Peace Research Institute Oslo and the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs. Accessed November 14, 2022.
<https://legacy.prio.org/utility/DownloadFile.ashx?id=1606&type=publicationfile>.

community members and gang members told the assessment team, in areas totally controlled by gangs, residents who did not leave generally depended on the gangs for access to goods and services typically provided by government agencies. Likewise, a former gang leader and Croix-des-Bouquets FGD participant highlighted that gangs could provide communities with schooling, food, and protection. Similarly, participants among other FGDs compared gangs to GOH agencies in terms of service.

However, the extent of these efforts to fill governance gaps was contested among respondents. Through its KIs and FGDs, the assessment team found mixed perspectives on the ability of gangs to fill in for the state. The assessment team determined that gangs partially filled governance gaps, particularly in areas they controlled completely; these efforts were appreciated by residents, but they were not enough to compensate for the damage done to the residents' lives and communities by gang violence. One ex-deputy notably observed: "Today's situation is extreme and paradoxical. Gangs are not only scaring the population, but providing them with basic services at the same time."

The CSA survey provided important insights into the degree to which Haitians believed gangs replace state functions. As shown in *Figure 23*, Haitians who are exposed to gangs typically only see limited support.

Figure 23: CSA survey responses to the question on activities gangs may or may not conduct



CSA data show that the true extent of gangs' provisions of goods and services is quite limited, and may be purposefully exaggerated or highlighted to the population via social and other media to mitigate the many gang actions that are broadly seen as harmful in the community. It seems as if gangs did just enough to maintain control and prevent the population from complicating their activities.

THEME 3 RECOMMENDATIONS (SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND POLITICAL DETERMINANTS OF INSECURITY AND VIOLENCE)

COMMUNITY AND FAMILY: These recommendations are focused on increasing community resilience to violence and gang activity.

- **INCREASE SOCIAL SUPPORT FOR SINGLE PARENTS AND POOR FAMILIES:** USAID should provide support for family-based prevention activities focused in high-crime areas (those affected, but not controlled, by gangs). This support could be implemented through a grant to a local or international NGO and include activities such as:
 - Providing social and psychological support to help families adapt to insecurity, such as promoting positive parent-child relationships.
 - Organizing support groups to encourage responsible fatherhood; providing social support to single-parent households by helping them identify and access income-earning opportunities and problem-solving resources.
 - Counseling families whose children are gang members; providing guidance and networking opportunities to families with sons who might be attracted to gangs.
 - Providing social and psychological support to families that moved from gang-controlled areas to adjust to their new neighborhoods and fight discrimination; for example, such support can be provided among groups of families facing similar circumstances.
 - Providing social support to families affected by domestic violence, including access to conflict resolution services and income-earning opportunities.
 - Providing training to families to increase their informal sector income.
- **SUPPORT COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN FIGHTING CRIME AND GANG VIOLENCE:** USAID should initiate a program that builds community capacity to prevent, mitigate, and respond to violence. The program could be implemented through a grant to a local NGO and include activities such as:
 - Creating participatory exercises to strengthen solidarity and collaboration among neighbors.
 - Developing participatory initiatives to clean up neighborhoods.
 - Developing an initiative that encourages neighbors to monitor and report violence.
 - Developing an initiative that discourages lynching by identifying and publicizing more humane options for punishing violence perpetrators.
 - Establishing and monitoring community violence prevention plans that gain the support of the private-sector, community, church, and CSO stakeholders.
 - Developing mechanisms that allow the Haitian diaspora to help their former neighborhoods fight crime and gang violence.
 - Facilitating CSO conflict resolution initiatives that bring together gangs and communities; facilitating mediation by religious groups.

- **SUPPORT YOUTH AFFECTED BY GANG VIOLENCE AND AT RISK OF RECRUITMENT:** USAID should support gang and violence prevention activities for youth with the highest risk of gang recruitment. This activity should provide evidence-based interventions that are most suited for the context, and target out-of-school youth and high-risk in-school youth. The program could be implemented by a grant to a local CSO and include activities such as:
 - Identifying opportunities for youth to demonstrate and build leadership skills.
 - Supporting church-run programs for youth who are at risk of gang recruitment.
 - Providing social support to adolescents who have left school.
 - Helping religious organizations to work with youth to leave gangs.
 - Helping young ex-gang members to break ties with gangs and rebuild their lives.
 - Establishing income-earning activities for at-risk youth.
- **TRAIN TEACHERS TO HELP CHILDREN RESIST GANG RECRUITMENT:** USAID should strengthen the capacity of public and private school teachers to deliver school-based violence prevention programming, ideally differentiated for low- and high-risk children and youth. This program could be implemented by a grant to a local NGO and include activities such as:
 - Developing teachers' skills to identify children at risk of being recruited to gangs.
 - Helping at-risk children develop positive friendships and participate in support groups.
 - Providing social support and counseling for children at risk of being recruited by gangs.
 - Monitoring teachers' use of these skills and measuring their impact on students.

CIVIL SOCIETY: In the absence of a strategy for crime reduction, civil society addresses insecurity with little collaboration from the GOH or HNP. The following recommendations account for this reality.

- **STRENGTHEN CSOs' CAPACITIES IN VIOLENCE PREVENTION, MITIGATION, AND RESILIENCE:** CSOs play an important role in helping residents and communities survive as violence spreads across the country. USAID should provide grants to CSOs to develop approaches on violence prevention, mitigation, and resilience in areas that are not severely affected by violence but have gang presence. These grants could also support CSOs to build relations with gangs in these areas, and extend their violence prevention and resilience activities into other areas. One or more grants could help a coalition of CSOs work together with HNP under a comprehensive strategic framework for crime reduction, with capacity-building assistance from NGOs. Further, USG actors could build CSOs' capacities to facilitate local crime reporting and assistance to victims, while investing in relevant mechanisms in neighborhoods.

POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE:

- **SUPPORT INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM:** To restore order and improve citizen security, it is essential to fight high-level corruption and proactively curb the drug, weapons, and other illegal activities that support gangs. USAID should support investigative journalism and the investigative capacity of civil society ahead of elections to enable the Haitian press and civil society to hold candidates accountable for corruption.

- **SUPPORT GREATER TRANSPARENCY AND REGULATION OF HAITIAN BANKS:** USG agencies along with other international donors should promote greater transparency and tighter controls on Haitian banks and financial institutions, which are key players in high-level corruption. USG actors should also coordinate with the U.S. Department of Treasury to investigate and prosecute money laundering by gangs and crime syndicates.
- **SUPPORT HAITIAN EFFORTS TO HOLD CREDIBLE AND TRANSPARENT PRESIDENTIAL AND LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS:** Haiti needs a legitimate president and a functioning legislative branch to address issues of citizen security and gang violence. This effort must be led by Haitians with monitoring support from USAID-funded electoral NGOs. This process should seek to balance speed with establishing the necessary conditions for a successful election.
- **CONTINUE TO PROMOTE AND ENABLE DECENTRALIZATION IN HAITI.** Haitian capacity to fight insecurity and gang violence also depends on structural reforms, such as the decentralization of the tax system. Decentralization would reduce the extensive financial and political dependence of local governments on the GOH, and empower citizens through improved service delivery and public participation. USAID and other international actors should build demand for an effective legislative framework for decentralization through support to local governments, civil society, and the GOH. USAID has been funding programs to pursue this goal for more than a decade, but a recent analysis of one project, LOKAL+, suggests that significant work remains to be done.¹⁰⁰
 - USAID and other international actors should build demand for an effective legislative framework for decentralization. The GOH, local governments, and civil society must all demand and facilitate the implementation of this legislation. LOKAL+ faced refusals by the national government to cede power to local governments, despite clear language of the 1987 Constitution and 2006 Decree, which outlined the responsibilities of different levels of government. Weaknesses identified by the CSA include basic education, vocational training, and public security, which are explicitly a responsibility of local governments.
 - USAID and other international actors should continue the work of LOKAL+, for example, by providing expanded support to local authorities. However, these actors should place a greater emphasis on stronger governance and accountability measures, such as promoting the effective and transparent management of public funds and boosting internal and external control mechanisms.
- **PROMOTE AND BUILD MOMENTUM FOR TAX REFORMS:** Haiti must have a functioning tax system to ensure economic development and reduce dependency on foreign aid. The current tax system is hopelessly flawed and skewed toward the shrinking middle class to the extent that general taxes make up only 13 percent of GNP.¹⁰¹ The system also benefits elites with the resources and connections to take advantage of it. Even if true tax reforms were not undertaken, raising broad awareness of the issue can be used to negotiate other, more realistic reforms. USG actors should support awareness-raising and advocacy efforts to promote reforms with respect to:
 - Local tax revenue, which is primarily property and patent taxes, must be adjusted to be less regressive. The patent tax is a flat fee, which disproportionately affects women and young

¹⁰⁰ OXFAM. 2021. "Empowering Local Governments? The LOKAL+ Project in Haiti." (July 2021). Available here.

¹⁰¹ International Monetary Fund. 2020. "Haiti: Selected Issues." Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://www.imf.org/~/media/Files/Publications/CR/2020/English/IHTIEA2020002.ashx>.

entrepreneurs, whereas the built property tax is seemingly plagued by evasion and poor collection efforts, which both primarily benefit the wealthy. Additionally, local governments need to be held accountable for increased revenue; under LOKAL+, it did not seem as if increased tax collection led to improved public services.

U.S. DOMESTIC ACTIVITIES:

- **SUPPORT USG INVESTIGATION OF U.S. ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED IN WEAPONS AND DRUG SMUGGLING TO HAITI:** U.S. companies and citizens, particularly those of Haitian descent, have been involved in criminal networks that are engaged in weapons and drugs smuggling. In many cases, these same companies and individuals have ties to Haitian politicians.¹⁰² The USG must be more proactive in tackling such criminal activities when they occur, fully or partially, on its soil. This is one area where the USG has only a limited reliance on the weak GOH, because major perpetrators would likely fall under USG's jurisdiction or could be reached through collaboration with international partners.

¹⁰² Harold, Isaac and Brian Ellsworth. 2022. "Anger Grows in Haiti over Weapons Trafficking from U.S. after Guns Shipped as Church Donations." US News and World Reports. (July 28). Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2022-07-28/anger-grows-in-haiti-over-weapons-trafficking-from-u-s-after-guns-shipped-as-church-donations>.

CROSS-CUTTING THEME: GENDER AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

This section synthesizes select cross-cutting insights regarding the relationship between gender, gender-based violence, and the broader state of insecurity in Haiti. The assessment team found that the gang phenomenon in Haiti is strongly influenced by gender. Evidence suggests that almost all Haitian gang members are men, although some women participate and undertake strategic tasks. Gang membership and related acts of violence are also connected with traditional notions of masculinity, which may be further demonstrated through instances of domestic violence or gang rape.

GENDER IN GANG MEMBERSHIP

Through a range of responses among gang members and others, the assessment team found that gangs were dominated by men. For example, one gang leader told the assessment team that his gang had no women: “Other gangs, such as Grand Ravine, have them. We are not comfortable with a girl in the middle of us during fights.” However, the assessment team found that some gangs did include female members, whose main roles were to transport illegal goods or for other strategic means as detailed below. Some women who participated in gangs were victims of gang rape or threats of violence.

However, it appears that gender dynamics within gangs may evolve with strategic objectives. For instance, one police officer FGD participant challenged traditional notions of gendered gang membership: “[Gangs] have both men and women. I have some guys who can tell that the women can be more violent than the men, meaner than men, meaner and more violent.” A private-sector leader also mentioned that “Gangs use women and children as cover. They involve them in looting.” Community respondents, such as a young woman in a Delmas FGD, also recognized that both young boys and girls were gang-involved.

GENDER-BASED GANG VIOLENCE AND ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Gender-based violence posed by gangs and lack of subsequent access to justice among victims are additional challenges within the current Haitian context. The assessment team found that male gang members inflicted violence against women on a routine basis, in addition to other violent and non-violent activities against women. On the prevalence of gang rapes, one citizen security expert stated: “Gang rapes were a strong indicator of gangs moving into a new neighborhood. It sends the message to the population that nobody is safe and can be protected. You all belong to the gang.” Respondents such as police officers and gang members also reiterated the prevalence of gender-based gang violence in communities and as an important component of the current insecurity crisis. This violence has a significant negative impact on the development of girls and young women, as one citizen security expert noted: “The psychological factor on young girls is huge – the fear of kidnapping and rape. They have problems developing human relations and relationships of confidence.”

Additionally, the assessment team found that data on gang rapes are limited, because women avoided reporting the crime to police and prosecutors. One judge summarized this phenomenon: “Women don’t like it to be known that they are rape victims. These women don’t like publicity about it. [...] Women also don’t wish to be pursued or persecuted by the perpetrators, knowing that they could be freed at any moment. To avoid being victimized again by the perpetrators, they do not complain.” Lack of awareness around legal rights and access to justice further complicate this challenge, as previously noted. While the GOH has established some legal aid offices, most female victims of gang violence lack access to legal aid. Other responses from civil society indicate that there is impunity among perpetrators of gender-based violence. One CSO director noted: “For 12 years, there has not really been criminal

assistance on the juridical level in [community]. Many people who have been charged with rape have not been judged.”

GENDER INSIGHTS FROM THE CSA SURVEY

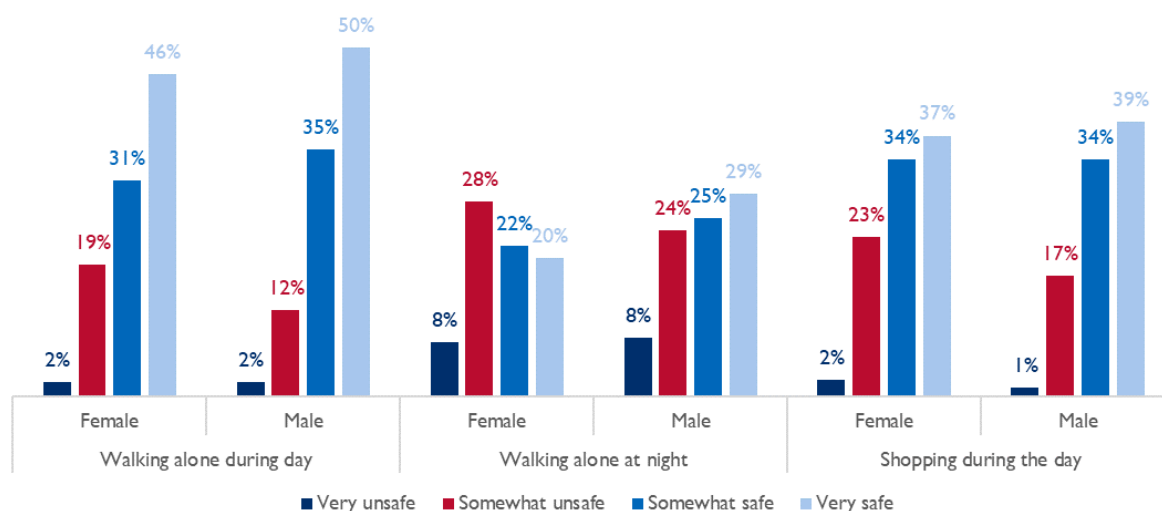
The CSA survey provides important insights regarding gendered perspectives on neighborhood crime, domestic violence, feelings of insecurity, attitudes toward neighborhoods, victimization, reporting of attacks and sexual assaults, and contact with the justice system.

NEIGHBORHOOD CRIME: While 10 percent of male respondents reported that gang members hung around the streets of their neighborhood fairly often, only 6 percent of female respondents agreed. Male and female respondents were equally aware of attacks on women in their neighborhoods: 5 percent of men and 6 percent of women reported that attacks on women in public (including harassment, sexual assault, and rape) happened fairly often in their neighborhoods.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: Similar percentages of men and women reported that violence occurred in their homes fairly often: 11 percent of men said violence took place in their homes fairly often and 10 percent of women agreed. A greater percentage of men (31 percent) than women (24 percent) believed that violence did not occur very often in their homes. The age groups with the greatest percentage of people who believed that violence occurred in their homes fairly often were those aged 55–59, 50–54, and 18–24. Comparatively, the age groups with the greatest percentage of respondents who believed that violence did not occur very often in their homes are aged 45–49 and 40–44 years. The most important departmental locations of those who believed that violence occurred in their homes fairly often in ranked order are 18 percent of men and women in the Northeast department, 17 percent in the Northwest department, and 9 percent in the West department. Alternatively, the most important departmental locations of those who believed that violence did not occur very often in their homes is Southwest (45 percent), Artibonite (41 percent), and West (20 percent).

FEELINGS OF INSECURITY: More women (19 percent) than men (12 percent) reported feeling somewhat unsafe walking in their neighborhood during the day. Women (28 percent) were also more likely than men (24 percent) to report feeling somewhat unsafe walking alone at night in their neighborhood. Additionally, a greater percentage of women than men noted feeling somewhat unsafe shopping during the day in their neighborhood: 23 percent of women compared to 17 percent of men.

Figure 24: CSA survey responses to questions about how safe respondents feel doing specific activities in their neighborhood

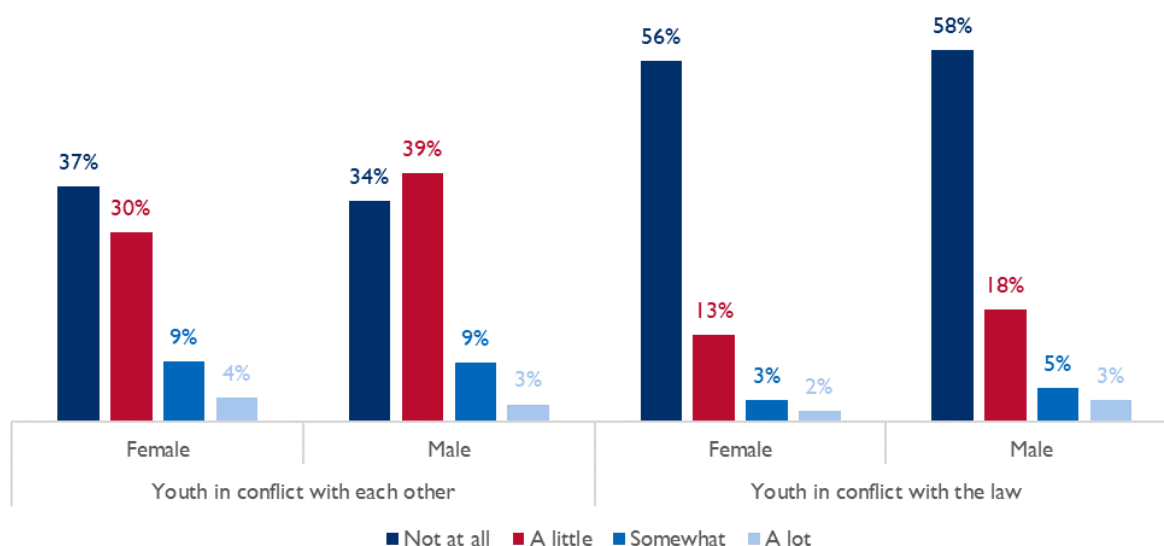


CHANGES IN ACTIVITIES DUE TO INSECURITY AND FEAR OF CRIME: More men than women reported not being able to do activities they would like to do somewhat often in their neighborhood due to worry about crime and violence: 21 percent of men compared to 17 percent of women. However, a greater percentage of women have modified their recreation and walks due to insecurity: 29 percent of women compared to 25 percent of men.

ATTITUDES TOWARD NEIGHBORHOOD: More men than women reported that their neighborhood had gotten worse in the last 12 months: 25 percent of men compared to 17 percent of women. More women (69 percent) than men (61 percent) said their neighborhood had stayed the same in the last 12 months.

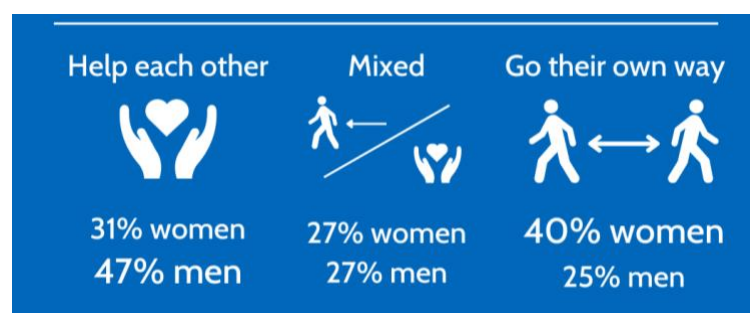
More men (17 percent) than women (12 percent) stated that one or more criminal gangs were active in their neighborhood. In addition, more men than women said that their neighborhood had been affected a little by youth in conflict with the law: 18 percent of men compared to 13 percent of women. More men than women also mentioned that their neighborhood had been affected a little by youth in conflict with each other: 39 percent of men compared to 30 percent of women.

Figure 25: CSA survey responses to questions about the extent to which respondents' neighborhood or community is affected by different types of youth conflicts



It also appears that men have more encounters than women with the police in their neighborhood: 33 percent of men said that police officers in their neighborhood searched or frisked anyone, broke up any groups, or arrested anyone in the area fairly often, while only 23 percent of women shared this opinion. In addition, more men (47 percent) than women (31 percent) claimed that they helped others in their neighborhood. Likewise, more women (40 percent) than men (25 percent) said they went their own way when dealing with others in their neighborhood. Finally, women reported being more dissatisfied than men about life in their neighborhoods: 14 percent of women noted feeling very dissatisfied living in their neighborhood, compared to 9 percent of men who were similarly dissatisfied.

Figure 26: CSA survey responses to questions about types of relationships that exist in the respondent's neighborhood



VICTIMIZATION: Similar percentages of women and men reported being attacked in the last 12 months. Of 701 respondents, 7 percent reported that they were physically attacked in the last 12 months. Of 297 women, 6 percent were attacked. Of 404 men, 7 percent were attacked. More men than women reported being attacked in the streets or at someone else's home. Locations of attacks on women included in the streets, their home, someone else's home, public transportation, and market. The locations of attacks on men were similar, while also including at work or in the fields. Additionally, of 701 respondents, 1 percent reported that they were victims of sexual assaults.

REPORTING OF ATTACKS AND SEXUAL ASSAULTS: A larger percentage of women than men reported their attacks to the police or a judge. Following the 17 attacks on women, 10 said that they had reported the crime to the police or a judge (59 percent). Following the 29 attacks on men, 13 said they had reported the crime to the police or a judge (45 percent).

In addition, occasional reporting of sexual assaults took place. Following the five reported sexual assaults, one person said they reported the crime to a police or judge (20 percent). Of the four victims of sexual assaults who did not report the crime, one felt that the incident was not important enough, one believed the police could not do anything about it, one thought the incident was a private matter, and one was afraid of the perpetrator.

CONTACT WITH THE JUSTICE SYSTEM: Similar percentages of women and men have had contact with the justice system in the last 12 months. Of 297 women, 2 percent had contact with a prosecutor, 2 percent with an attorney or public defender, and 2 percent with the courts in the last 12 months. Of 404 men, 4 percent had contact with a prosecutor, 1 percent with an attorney or public defender, and 3 percent with the courts in the last 12 months.

Figure 27: CSA survey responses to questions about having any type of contact with different justice sector actors in the last 12 months

